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THE  
PRIVATE SOLDIER,

BY THE LATE  
CAPTAIN JOHN BISHOP

REVISED BY  
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**THE**  
**PRIVATE SOLDIER.**

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THE  
PRIVATE SOLDIER.

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BY MR. J. SHIPP,

*Author of Memoirs, Military Bijou,  
&c. &c.*

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“ A kingdom's destiny should not be the sport  
Of passion's reckless winds. There is a time  
When men, in very weariness of heart  
And careless desolation, tamed to yield  
By misery, strong as death, will lay their souls  
E'en at the conqueror's feet, as nature sinks,  
After long torture, into cold, and dull,  
And heavy sleep. But comes there not an hour  
Of fierce atonement? Aye, the slumberer wakes  
With gathered strength and vengeance. And the sense,  
And the remembrance of his agonies,  
Are in themselves as power, whose fearful path  
Is like the path of ocean, when the heavens  
Take off its interdict. Wait thou the hour  
Of that nigh impulse.”

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1834.





## PREFACE.

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In the following pages, I have presented a picture drawn from my own experience ; I have not stated a sentiment which I am not prepared to support by the evidence of fact and living witnesses. If it be frightful in its appearance, it is not therefore my fault ; I could have made the shades much darker : my object, however, is merely to point out the necessity of immediate measures for the amelioration of the state of the private soldier ; for, if a war ensues, regiments, on foreign service in particular, will still be exposed to all the horrors here recited. Let me therefore entreat those who have

influence, to exert it in preparing petitions to Parliament; let the Electors press upon Members of Parliament, the necessity for the immediate abrogation of those sanguinary clauses of the military code which apply to our private soldiers. Let this be done, and they will not long continue to render our army the moral aversion of the country: then, indeed, if the tocsin be sounded, the best and bravest of our youth would respond to its call; then, indeed, would the British army be invincible! I must not, however, commit these pages to the press, without cautioning the reader, that though characters such as I have described do yet exist as officers in our army, yet he is not to suppose that all, or even a majority, thus degrade themselves below "the brutes which perish." No! the high and

honourable, the noble in birth and spirit, the elevated by education and talent, have there found ample employment for all their endowments ; and the British army has the proud boast that in its ranks are some of the choicest spirits of the age, some of the most ardent patriots, and some of the most enlightened philanthropists. This, however, does not in the least weaken my arguments, nor ought it to detract from the influence of my facts ; for if but one such a colonel of a regiment, or captain of a ship, existed ; nay, if none such existed at present, but if human nature ever produced such a being, and there existed a possibility of his entering the army or navy, all my facts, all my arguments must operate in their utmost force. Unfortunately, however, I am obliged to assert, that such have been,

and still remain, in our army, and doubtless also in our navy. Oh! that with the will which I do possess, I had the power of the nervous and elegant Junius, that, without presumption, I might adopt his language towards these scourges of our army, "I would pursue them through life, and try the last exertions of my abilities to preserve the imperishable infamy of their names, and thus confer on them an execrable immortality."

*Liverpool, 1834.*

THE  
PRIVATE SOLDIER.

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CHAPTER I.

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“The noblest motive is the public good.”

If we look back to the most remote ages, and take a survey of the revolutions of empires, we shall find that the soldier has generally been the active instrument of those changes which have taken place in the tide of events—changes so mighty, that they have formed eras in the long dim vista of time—bright, starting, points, by which the chronologist and historian can, in their retrospective views, divide the more quiet stream of common-place incident. The sagacity of the politician and the wisdom of the legislator would have been of little avail, had it not been for the skill of the general, and the heroism and strength of the common soldier.

In the earliest and most rude stages of society, it is well known that every man of a tribe who was capable of bearing arms was a soldier. At the call of the patriarchal chief every man sharing the common benefit, cast aside the simple implements of husbandry and girded on his sword. Whether it were to repel the fierce invader who would plunder him of the fruits of his industry, or to second the daring ambition of his leader, and thereby add to the renown of his tribe, were matters alike immaterial to him. The adventure of warfare was a recreation to him after the monotonous toil, to which, by an interval of peace, he had been subjected. In the camp he could win that glory which his heart coveted. If he returned triumphant with victory on his brow, his valour would be rewarded by the smiles of the maidens :—If he fell bravely in the battle's heat, he was sure of distinguished honour being paid to his memory. In either case his deeds would be recorded in the songs of the bards.

As tribes, for mutual protection, formed themselves into confederacies and states, governed under one head ;—as the stronger took from the weaker and thereby formed empires, the soldier

began to have a more distinct profession, and was looked upon with respect by all those who owed to him the protection of their property, and the rank, and consequently privilege, which their country held in the scale of nations. It was then, when the name was honoured in proportion as the individual bearing it was valiant and virtuous, that instances of magnanimity occurred which have been the admiration of all succeeding generations. It was then that the mother in her high enthusiasm, smiled as she buckled on the armour of her son, and bade him go forth with the good and the brave, and emulate the deeds of his sire. It was then that the bosom of the stripling beat high with martial ardour—that he pined for the day when his age would fit him to go forth to the tented field. He felt that it would be his greatest pride to be a soldier. Alas! what mother of the present day would willingly send her son into the private ranks of our army?—What youth, 'till driven by extreme necessity would enlist himself under our banners?

I pass over the first feudal ages, when each man was at the beck of his liege lord, for then both nobles and vassals were but so many hordes



of licensed banditti. The institutions of chivalry introduced a somewhat higher order of things by casting a halo of romance round the laurels of the soldier; and the extensive wars which subsequently took place over Europe, had the effect, by forcing the parts of armies to act in concert with each other, of introducing a greater degree of organization. The wandering masses who had heretofore only been trained to predatory warfare according to the whim of a capricious baron, now became by their movements, as parts of one vast machine, to all intents and purposes, disciplined soldiers. Emulation was excited: heroic deeds stimulated to imitation—honour and valour were again, in conjunction, considered the highest virtues, and the name of soldier was venerated accordingly.

Confining myself to Great Britain I shall pass over the long period of "domestic fury and fierce civil strife," which was so little favourable to the growth of lofty feelings, and advance at once to our own day, and the more immediate subject of these pages.

By slow degrees, as the country resumed its tranquillity, the establishment of regular troops

became a paramount consideration. No pains were spared from time to time, in having them disciplined and commanded in the most perfect manner. To carry this into effect it seems to have been deemed expedient in military legislation, to confer, at different periods, degrees of power upon the individuals in command, which in time became almost despotic. The free spirit of the people, perhaps, could not at first, uninfluenced as it was by that excitement which stimulated the energies of the ancient soldier, brook the decisive command, or accord that ready and mechanical obedience which is so necessary to perfection in military manœuvres. Hence, perhaps, an endowment of commanders with strong coercive powers might have been thought in some measure essential, especially under the existing notions. Be this as it may, surely these laws ought now to be regarded as the remnants of a more barbarous age. Yet it is evident that while all things have been gradually improving, while liberality of feeling has been on the march, while the philanthropic legislator and the true patriot have been labouring heart and mind to improve the condition of every other class of

British subjects, the claims of the poor private soldier, who, in time of need, yields to none in usefulness, have been almost or altogether neglected.

The mode of training a soldier of the present day, one would imagine, had been invented for the express purpose of breaking his spirit, and of subduing every spark of ardour and generosity with which he might have been gifted. Instead of his energies being roused and encouraged, and all the bravery of his nature put as it were into a hot bed ready to burst forth, when needed, in the service of his country, his very soul is cramped by his subjection to a code of laws, which allowing, as they do, so much scope for the exercise of individual and capricious tyranny, are in every way calculated to reduce a high and noble spirit to meanness or imbecility, or, failing that, to drive it to distraction and ruin.

It is thus that the profession has become, as far as regards the private soldier, a sort of isolated calling, which is almost despised by every other class of society. And, may I be allowed to say, that it is no wonder such should be the case, when the very officers of the army treat

their men as though they were a race of beings below the common level of humanity.

It is true that some little has been done, and a great deal has been said, of late years, with a view to ameliorate the condition and to better the prospects of this oppressed portion of his Majesty's subjects and servants. Much, very much, remains to be done. There is a wide field for the laudable exertions of those who have the ability and the inclination to benefit this class of their fellow men. For myself, I am but one amongst the many. My efforts are weak; yet, such as they are, they shall be devoted with their utmost energy to the endeavour to awaken the sympathy of those, who have it in their power to remove the degradation which hangs upon the name of "*common soldier.*" So long as one atom of tyranny remains in that code by which the soldier is governed, I shall remain firm at my post. The blind advocates of "things as they are," may probably look upon my endeavours with vexation or affected contempt; but such feelings I shall despise, while I turn with proud satisfaction to the ranks of those, whose benevolence and humanity en-

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title them to the glorious name of the "Soldier's friend."

The first object of these pages will be to exhibit, as far as possible, the actual condition of the British soldier, and to contrast it with what I humbly conceive it ought to be. My endeavour shall be to shew the materials of which the British army is composed, the ideas, the feelings, of those whose exertions have upheld in every clime, in every land,

—"the flag that braved a thousand years  
The battle and the breeze."

The difficulty of attaining distinction consequent on the usages of the service—the thorny path through which a man must struggle ere he can achieve rank, and the almost certainty of that path ending in disappointment, may be looked upon as the great reasons why so few enlist who are actuated by the noble desire of carving out for themselves a name and fortune, and of being the defenders of their native land. If we take a glance along our lines, even at the present day, we shall find there comparatively few, who have not been driven by some neces-

sity, real or fancied, to take refuge with the recruiting serjeant. Not a few have left their homes in consequence of some domestic quarrel, and have, by enlisting, *taken revenge upon themselves*, in the weak thought that they were inflicting pain upon others. Some have been driven by the first despair of slighted love: others there are, men of education, who having, by thoughtless dissipation, fallen from their station in society, and ruined themselves, who enlist in the army as their only and last refuge against a state of miserable destitution. And lastly, the laws against bastardy have been the means of furnishing no small number of recruits to our marching regiments. A long continuance of peace, by lessening the demand for fresh men, has perhaps, in a great measure, tended to render the recruiting department somewhat rigid in enquiring into the characters of those who offer themselves. Still I am convinced that the main body of our army will be found to consist of the materials above named. It contains men of every variety, whether we regard previous employment, habits of life, character, or acquirements.

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In the case of men who enter the army under the influence of such motives and feelings as those above detailed, the mind, harassed and far removed from the field on which it is destined to act, leaves the body, in a great measure destitute of its co-operation by any of its faculties, except the power of volition, to go listlessly and mechanically through the various duties which it has to perform. The tempers of such men will naturally have become soured, and their dispositions peevish and restless. Yet the buoyancy and elasticity of their minds are not so totally lost, but that even the very worst of these men may be restored to happiness in the re-employment of the better feelings of their nature. The means of achieving such a consummation so "devoutly to be wished" by every votary of humanity, are to be found—not in coercion—not in the flourish of the cat o' nine tails—but in that kindness and conciliation of tone and demeanour, which should ever pervade the enforcement of the harsh rules and laws of military regulation.

To bring such men to the necessary state of discipline, order, and obedience, does certainly

require the possession of a very great degree of tact and temper, perhaps, too, the possession and exercise of a share of discretionary power.

I would not, by the last expression, be understood to mean any thing like unlicensed, uncontrolled, despotic sway, but a degree of authority which shall for the time be unquestioned, though liable at an after period to be reviewed. The almost unlimited extent to which the commanding officer of a regiment can exercise his will, particularly when on foreign service, has, it is well known, been frequently exemplified in a manner the most contemptible and tyrannical. As my experience has furnished me with plenty of instances of all the assertions which I make, I shall, on this subject, present the reader with a slight illustration :—

In the years 1811-12, H. M. 53d regiment of foot was cantoned at Meerut, a station in the upper provinces under the Bengal Presidency. There was in this regiment a young man whose steadiness and sobriety were proverbial. Some of his comrades laughed at him, others admired him, and all wished they had resolution sufficient to enable them to follow his example. In



place of expending the pittance which was accorded to him by way of pay, he regularly laid by all that he could possibly save from his daily expences. Out of the sum thus accumulated, he had, by degrees, purchased for himself apparel of a rather better description than that which was usually worn by his comrades off duty. He was one day sauntering past the General Hospital, on his way to the lines of the 24th Light Dragoons, habited in a pair of fine nankeen trowsers, a black silk cravat, with shoes of a lighter and better quality than those provided for the men: he had, moreover, a watch in his pocket, and, in short, presented the appearance of a man respectably attired. To borrow a poet's idea, "He whistled as he went, for want of thought." His commanding officer happened to be passing at the time. Now one would imagine that it would have been a pleasure to the latter to look upon a man, who, instead of resorting to the canteen, had husbanded his money, and expended it in adding to the respectability and neatness of his outward man. Probably some thoughts similar to these crossed the mind of the young private as he saw his

Colonel stop in attentive observance of his person. With the prompt alacrity of a soldier, fond of his duty, he obeyed the gruffly uttered "Come here, you Sir!" which burst from his commander.

He advanced in the truest military style and stood with his heels together, toes at an angle of 40 deg. body erect, and head well up. Having saluted, he quietly waited the further pleasure of his commander. The latter having scrutinized him from top to toe, exclaimed, "What do you mean, you rascal, by being so fantastically dressed; and in total disobedience of orders? Go home this instant, you scoundrel, and take off those clothes, or I'll have you well flogged. You are confined a week to the barracks." Having delivered himself in this highly dignified manner, the Colonel stalked away, pluming himself, doubtless, upon having, by this timely and wholesome exercise of his authority, cured one of his men of a crime so revolting as that of vanity. But what, let me ask, must have been the feelings of a high spirited youth thus ignominiously treated? However indignant, however deeply wounded

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he might feel, he dared not reply. But the commander of a regiment ought to be the man to whom every individual in it should look up with respect and veneration. If he disgrace himself by actions which the meanest capacity under his command can perceive to be worse than childhood, whence is the respect to come? Is there any section in the articles of war which could prevent the young man above named, from brooding in silence over the contumelious rebuke so undeservedly bestowed? Could *he*, by any possibility, cherish respect for the man who had thus availed himself of the power which he possessed, to insult his feelings, to degrade him, and even to inflict punishment where there was no crime?

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## CHAPTER II.

It would appear, that, under the present system of military discipline, the British soldier is conceived to be an animal devoid of the faculty of reason ; and, like an irrational brute, it is deemed impossible to rule him but by the fear of corporeal infliction : nor is he supposed capable of guiding himself but under the immediate influence of certain standing orders emanating from the Colonel of the Regiment. He is looked upon and treated as though he were a mere piece of machinery, possessing properties of motion whose propelling power has existence solely in the bosom of his Commander.

I once heard a Captain of some standing required to state his opinion of what formed the *beau ideal* of a soldier. His reply—which at the time amused me, though it has since afforded much matter of reflection was as follows :—

“ Why—I prefer a tall, insensible bumpkin, strong as a dray-horse and ignorant as an ass,

to carry a load, like a camel, without grumbling; a fellow that would fetch and carry like a dog."

The person to whom the question was put had somewhat more of the "milk of human kindness" in him, and said, "well, and of what materials would you build a good officer?" After some humming and snuffing and grinning, he replied, "why, officers should be gentlemen." His friend asked him what he meant by a gentlemen:—he replied, "Oh! a man of honourable principles—of undoubted courage." I suppose, said his friend, he must be a man of humanity? "Humanity!" replied he, "there is no such word in the articles of war—humanity in the army, sir, would strike at the very basis of discipline, would upset the system altogether."

Perhaps, by way of contrast to this description of the gallant Captain, I shall be excused if I describe to the reader my own idea of one of the same species of being, approaching the superlative degree of perfection.

His personal qualifications should present the greatest possible combination of strength and activity, based by a soundness of constitution sufficient to afford him the requisite powers of en-

durance. With respect to his mental capacities, generally considered matters of such trivial import by most officers, I would have them of the highest order. He should be endowed with fortitude, courage, loyalty, and humanity. It would be possible for me to enumerate many other qualities, but, upon consideration, they would be found to have their dependence, more or less, upon those which I have named. The first of these—*fortitude*, may be defined to be, that power existing in the mind, which enables a man to summon all his energies about him, to meet, in the best possible manner, the dangers of the moment, and to endure unavoidable evils with calmness and firmness. *Courage*, I should say, is that degree of daring which urges a man to disregard personal danger in the achievement of that which his duty requires. The distinction between animal and moral courage, I shall not pause to enquire into, but content myself with remarking, that a due proportion of each should enter into the composition of the true soldier. I need scarcely remark how necessary an ingredient *loyalty* is, obvious as it is, that the protection of his king and country should be the guiding star of a soldier's exertions.

Humanity is the last qualification which I have named; it were trite to say that it is not the least. It is this virtue which marks the influence of civilization, and distinguishes the warrior of an enlightened country from a barbarian.

Such are my ideas of the endowments necessary to form a complete soldier, and Providence having distinguished the human being, by the gift of rationality, such, in a greater or minor degree, may every soldier be rendered.

The question then is, how are we to act in order to bring the system of management as near to perfection as the nature and present state of mankind will admit.

That the character of the soldier depends in a great measure, if not altogether, upon the conduct and bearing of those who are placed in authority over him, is a position, which, I believe, will scarcely be doubted. If any broad line of distinction should mark the different gradations of rank in the army, surely every one will allow that a distinction of manners is not the least important. An officer ought to be no less distinguished above his men for the suavity and high polish of his demeanour, than for the calmness

and dignity which marks his intercourse with them, and with which it is necessary to enforce his orders. That the good officer will be the means of making the good soldier, and *vice versa* innumerable instances will prove. I will, with the reader's permission, resort once more to that store-house of facts which a long period of service has enabled me to treasure up.

I remember while in the 87th Regiment, a young officer, on evening parade, exclaiming, in allusion to one of his men,—“Serjeant!—that d——d son of a b——h is drunk.” Even if the man were drunk, language of this kind could not be attended with any good effect. The man alluded to, stung to the quick by the brutality of the remark, and thinking, perhaps, of a fond parent, then separated from him by the intervening space of nearly one fourth of the globe, replied to the insult by saying—“*my* mother is no more a b——h than yours.” He was instantly dragged from the ranks, brought to a court martial, and flogged. His Colonel remarked to him that if, instead of replying, he had complained to him, the officer would have been punished for the impropriety of his language.



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It is not my intention to endeavour to justify the retort of the soldier:—on the contrary, I admit that he was guilty of conduct tending so strongly to insubordination, that it could not be suffered to pass unnoticed. But who was the primary and exciting cause of his fault?—The officer, assuredly! Reader:—place yourself for one moment in the situation of the unfortunate private. Had similar language, similar epithets, been applied to you—proceeding though it were from the mightiest ruler of the earth, what would your feeling have been?—Would not the degrading insinuation have roused the free spirit within you to rebellion? Would not your sense of the injury have been aggravated by the supervenient circumstance of the insult proceeding from a person far above you in rank? Methinks I see the marks of your anger in your flashing eye, and the deepening tinge which suffuses your countenance. You would, most likely, in the excitation of the moment, have neglected all adventitious distinctions, and remembered only the base level to which the party had reduced himself. In such a case, even the veriest sycophant, if one spark of pride remained in his bosom, would, spite of

himself, feel it rekindle and rebel.—What then must have been the feeling of the high-spirited soldier ?

I could relate instance upon instance of a similar tendency to the above, but that is sufficient for my object. Now, one of the feelings to be most strongly cherished in the breast of a soldier, ought to be confidence in, and profound respect for, his leaders. This sort of feeling will induce a degree of heroism, without which his efforts are of no more use, than would be the undirected discharges of a steam gun :—But whence is such confidence to come?—can it be fostered in the breast of a soldier, who finds himself treated with a degree of contumely that he cannot brook? The fault, in all cases of this kind, lies with the officer, who, when he insults a soldier, not only reduces himself for the time, to the level of such soldier, but is guilty of a high degree of moral turpitude, when he can so far forget every feeling of humanity, as wantonly to wound an individual, who, but for the casual superiority of rank, may be his equal,—perhaps, in many respects, his superior.

It has been frequently said, that where in-



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humanity is inherent in the breast of any individual, cowardice is sure to be a concomitant. My own repeated experience inclines me to acquiesce in the truth of the remark. The gallant Captain, whose *brave ideal* of a soldier I have given above, in addition to his other high qualifications for commanding a hundred men, appeared to have so short a memory, that in ordinary times, he could not remember the name of any one of them. His usual mode of addressing them was, "You, Sir!" or "You, Fellow!" This abrupt and unpolite way of speaking to a fellow man, is one of the methods by which the affection of the soldier is frequently alienated. It displays a puerile consciousness, a weak assumption of superiority, and a desire for exhibiting the same, which, under any circumstances, must be inexpressibly galling. Oh! if officers, one and all would but strive to make that true nobility which exists in the soul, the criterion of their superiority, what a different army we should have! In the day of battle, in the hour of danger, the consequences of this unbecoming conduct become distinctly apparent. Amongst men who find themselves exposed to

one common peril, the distinctions of rank are in a great measure lost sight of. The conduct of the worthy to whom I have last alluded, furnishes me with a strong case in point. He usually carried a snuff-box well supplied with real Lundyfoot. On one of the occasions of the storming of Bhurtpore, the valiant captain most miraculously recovered his memory, and became suddenly endowed with the faculty of calling soldiers by their right names, for whom, in more peaceful seasons, "*fellow*" had been his best appellation. It was known that he had a peculiar susceptibility of danger, on any approach of which his snuff-box was always called into requisition. It is more than probable that he found its contents a useful stimulant. Anxious, as all good officers should be, to keep up the spirits of his men, he, on this occasion, freely imparted to them his own specific against fear. He handed his box round amongst them with praiseworthy liberality. This was truly a remarkable circumstance, for dread of danger out of the question, his box was equally impervious with his heart to every impression apart from selfishness. On this occasion, his heart and

box being together opened by the influence of the approaching horrors, he walked up to a man named Alexander Moore, whom he had some short time previously caused to be flogged. "Moore," said the captain, "a pinch?" Poor Moore, whose back at that moment was scarcely healed, smarting under the sense of his wrongs, gave vent to his feelings, by replying with rude but witty sarcasm, "a pinch!—I wish to God, your conscience pinched you, as my poor lacerated back does me." With this, striking with energy the muzzle of his firelock, and bestowing on his oppressor a look which made him shrink, he turned upon his heel, and walked steadily from the spot. The officer, assuming a coolness which I knew he did not feel, turned to a serjeant, and remarked, "Moore seems offended. Well, poor fellow! I'm not surprised at it. His back must be as raw as a piece of beef." He then left us, and for the rest of the day, which was a warm one, I saw no more of "Old Snuffy," as some of the officers called him.

The criminal under sentence of death can scarcely feel his situation more horrible, than does the cruel and despotic wretch, who, in the

hour of danger, finds himself surrounded by the men whom he has, in the wantonness of unprovoked malice, or in the rigour of unnecessary austerity, persecuted by every means in his power. How wretched, how withering must have been the feelings of this captain, when the private soldier, a being, whom in the pride of rank he was accustomed to regard as but one remove from a brute, scorned the unwonted condescension implied in his proffered pinch of snuff. Had Moore survived the conflict of that day of carnage, his back, already cut to the bone, would perhaps have paid for the feeling which his swelling heart had prompted him to display. But he fell, poor fellow! Fell—gallantly fighting for the weal and glory of England. He died for that country, by whose blind and cruel institutions, he had been ranked with the vilest of her criminals, and treated like a slave!

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**CHAPTER III.**

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“ Look on this picture and on this.”

I shall now turn to another view of my subject. Does the private soldier, by entering into the service of his country—by becoming a candidate for the honours of the brave—and by placing himself in a situation, where he is always ready to shed his blood, to yield his life in defence of the liberties and laws of the land that gave him birth, thereby forfeit his own right to the benefits of such liberties and laws? No! He is still a citizen. He is a freeborn subject of the realm, whereby he claims, as his native inheritance, an undoubted right, property, and portion in its legislative enactments. He claims also his share of interest in the estates composing parliament; in their power, privileges, and jurisdiction, which are the fountain head from which all our laws spring. It is this which the British soldier, in common with every British subject, feels to be his principal and most valued

inheritance ; and honours, respects, and prizes in the highest degree, till he is unfortunately taught, that his share in these high immunities is very small, compared with that possessed by those whom he helps to protect in their enjoyment. Among the three things for which the Athenian Captain thanked God, one was, "that he was born a Grecian, and not a barbarian." Look to the treatment which the British soldier receives ; and ask yourself whether he can be thankful to the Almighty, that it has been his lot to be born a Briton.

The trial by jury is no less a part and parcel of the birthright of every British soldier, than it is of every British subject. I would not be understood to go the length of asserting, that the forms of our civil or criminal courts should be introduced in the trial of military offences ; but I cannot help wishing, that some of the great advantages appertaining to the form of trial in those courts were extended to the soldier, when placed before a court martial. In a criminal court, the presiding judge invariably considers himself and acts as counsel for the prisoner, if the latter have not any other legal assistance. In



discharge of this duty, he not only cross-examines the witnesses, whereby some important truth is probably brought to light, but he prevents the prosecuting counsel from infringing upon irritating matters, extraneous to the case. Above all, be it remembered, that the prisoner in a criminal court, takes his trial upon a substantive and clearly defined charge. In its proceedings, it is the business of the court, to confine itself strictly and solely to the investigation of the truth or falsehood of such charge; previous conduct or character has nothing to do with the offence in hand, though these are very properly taken into consideration, in apportioning the punishment of the prisoner, in case he should be found guilty. All those destined to take an active share in the proceedings, are supposed to be men of experience, and all prejudices, of whatever kind, are carefully endeavoured to be quenched in every bosom. A degree of decorum and propriety, befitting the solemn tribunal for the distribution of justice, is rigidly enforced in all quarters, whether the individual at the bar be so despicable in his ignorance, his filth, and his crime, as to be but one remove from a beast; or

the misled fondling of wealth, whom indiscretion has led astray, and whose appearance and misfortunes would create an interest in every bosom.

I will now, on the other hand, take a view of the proceedings of a Regimental Court Martial, for the trial of a soldier. Ere I proceed on this head, however, I will relate an instance in which the ingenuity of the cleverest pettifogger, intent upon multiplying items to swell a case for his emolument, could scarcely have contrived to do more than was done by a Captain in his Majesty's service; that is, to frame six distinct charges out of a trifling breach of discipline, which hardly deserved the name of a crime. The matter was as follows:—

A soldier had absented himself during one night from the barracks of his regiment, then in cantonments at Caunpore. He was present at drill next morning in good time, perfectly clean and sober. The fact of his absence having come accidentally to the knowledge of his captain, he was placed in confinement, and brought, in due time, to a Court Martial. The charges against him were stated as follows:—

“A.B. Confined by me for highly disgraceful

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conduct, subversive of good order and military discipline, and in direct violation of the standing orders of the regiment,

*Firstly* :—In absenting himself from his barracks during the whole of the night of Saturday last, thereby setting a bad example to the young men of his company.

*Secondly* :—In prowling about the great bazaar.

*Thirdly* :—In being in plain clothes.

*Fourthly* :—In returning the worse for liquor.

*Fifthly* :—In being dirty on parade :—and

*Sixthly* :—In sleeping on his horse :

All and every part of the above offences being in breach of the articles of war, highly tending to the injury of the service, and in palpable defiance of all orders or order."

On the first of these charges the prisoner was found guilty, of the other five he was acquitted.

This affords an instance of what I have but too often observed with extreme regret. I mean the pleasure which many officers seem to take in torturing the most simple charge against a soldier into a crime of hideous magnitude and deformity,

sometimes by an unnecessary virulence in the statement of it, and at others, by an ingenious amplification; a swelling out of the list of instances into a perfect catalogue, such as would not disgrace the exaggerating powers of a special pleader.

Military laws are necessarily severe, but unless we say that an officer is not a soldier, why should this severity press so hardly upon the latter, while the delinquencies of the former, though of the same nature, may be carried to a ten-fold extent, and allowed to pass unheeded. How often does it happen, that an officer absents himself from morning parade, in consequence of the effects of the preceding night's debauch? How frequently does it happen, that a man is sent out of the ranks for being drunk on duty, by the orders of an officer, who is himself, at the very moment, in a worse plight? The man is tried and flogged, or, at least, suffers imprisonment in the black hole. To take notice of the condition of the officer, unless indeed it were disgustingly ostensible, would be esteemed the effect of malignity. Are not the commissioned officer and the private soldier both equally

bound by the same oath of allegiance, and are they not both subject to the same code of laws? Will not any person possessing a well regulated mind, say, that the conduct which may be denominated "unsoldierlike" in a private must be as bad, if not worse, in an officer? If a private soldier be setting a bad example when he gets intoxicated, is not the officer, from the very weight of his superior rank, when he appears in the same state, setting before their eyes a still more pernicious pattern? But it is useless to waste more words on such a subject.

Of late years there has been an officer appointed in each regiment, whose duties resemble those of the Judge-Advocate. He conducts the proceedings of all Regimental *General Courts Martial*. He is invested with full powers of arbitration, and it is his duty to act equally for the prosecution and for the prisoner. It would be an essential benefit if the assistance of this officer were rendered available in every Regimental Court Martial, without confining it, as at present, to the general courts. If such were the case, the routine of business at the former would be better regulated, and much of the frivolity and disre-

gard of the proceedings which characterise the conduct of members, and especially of junior ones, would necessarily cease. Indeed, the behaviour which I have remarked at these courts has frequently made me shudder; especially when I have taken into contemplation, that on the result of the day's proceedings depended the fortune, prospects, and welfare of an individual who had perhaps passed a long life meritoriously in his country's service. In place of that decency and strict attention which should mark the demeanour of men engaged in duties of a most serious and responsible nature, I have seen the members engaged in conversation, and heard them discuss subjects totally foreign to the matter in hand:— a horse-race perhaps, or a match at billiards. The whole business seemed to be a *bore* to them.

The evidence being concluded, the opinion of each member of the court is asked, consecutively, commencing with the *junior*. It happens not unfrequently, such opinion is given, without the individual delivering it having listened to one tittle of what has been going on. Perhaps he was engaged in conversation:—or probably he might be more laudably, I will say, because si-

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lently, employed in caricaturing the prisoner, the witnesses or by-standers. Instead of a proper and decorous reply, when the important question, whether "guilty or not guilty," has been put to him, I have heard a member say, and that not in one solitary instance,—“O, he's a d——d troublesome rascal; by flogging him we shall get rid of him for a month at least.” In pursuance of similar notable resolutions, the man is flogged, he goes to the hospital, and perhaps they do “get rid of him for a month *at least.*” But mark, reader! in what spirit the decision has been really pronounced, and then tell me, if, as an inheritor of the equal and impartial right of trial by jury, you can lend your sanction to it. The prisoner, in such a case, has not been punished for the commission of the specific crime with which he was charged!—nay, many of those who coolly passed sentence upon him, did not even know what it was of which they had pronounced him guilty. They might, but even this is doubtful, have glanced over the list of charges framed by the prosecutor, and I have already shown in what manner these are drawn up. The man's guilt or innocence of these charges has not been thorough-

ly inquired into, but the officers, acting upon their knowledge of his previous character, have condemned him to the lash.

An individual unacquainted with military affairs, will scarcely credit these statements of the judiciary proceedings of the army; yet are they founded in truth, and uncontaminated with a single shade of exaggeration. A marked man is in all cases nearly sure of condemnation. There is no scrutinizing cross-examination of the witnesses: no energetic endeavours to establish the man's guilt or innocence so strongly, that the consciences of his judges may be clear in awarding his punishment; but the whole matter is shuffled over like a disagreeable task, and the result might be prophesied almost before the flimsy formula commences. Should the delinquent attempt to justify his conduct he is set down with—"Silence, sir!—We want no lies. Your character is well known." Is it possible that such things can be tolerated in these enlightened days? Are courts, which should be those of justice, to be turned into the very dens of injustice?—I trust for the honour of the British name, that the day of investigation and of reform is not far distant. The



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feeling lately evinced on the subject has been such as leads me to hope, that I shall still live to see the day, when the private soldier shall be treated like a man, when his condition will be such as his services merit. One of the first and most important steps towards the achievement of this desirable end, will be such an improvement in the organization of military courts, as shall assimilate them more closely with the ordinary tribunals of the land. There should be nothing left in the power of individual caprice or settled malevolence, every thing ought to be fixed by rigid rule. The general routine of the proceedings of a Regimental Court Martial, are such as to be a stain upon the name of justice. It is true, the witnesses are called, sworn, and examined; yet amongst those who take the trouble to listen to their testimony, there is not one who thinks it a part of his duty to sift its nature. The President of the Court is a captain, and from the rank he has attained, he is presumed to be a man of some experience. If such be the case, the benefit of his knowledge is confined to himself, for he never imparts it to his brother members. Neither does he sum up the evidence, or explain

to the court the manner in which he conceives it to bear upon the case. He contents himself, as I have before observed, with demanding the opinion of each individual member, commencing with the youngest. This is, perhaps, some strippling, who having but lately shaken off the trammels of a school, is afraid of being thought too *milky*, as it is termed; as though tenderness and humanity were feelings of which a man or a soldier ought to be ashamed. The youngster replies, most probably, without once allowing his judgment to interfere with the decision which he gives. The question goes round, and in fifteen cases out of twenty, the cat-o'nine tails is brought into requisition, when a short period of confinement, or a few extra drills, would have been punishment far more commensurate to the offence, and in effect infinitely more salutary.

And who are the men thus brought to the triangle to be tied up, and vilely lashed like dogs; to be disgraced with the scourge for the indiscretion of a moment, perhaps, after a long period of faithful service? They are the defenders of our freedom, and the very sinews by

which we have seen are necessary to the  
 well-being of the nation. They are the  
 only means of securing the welfare of the  
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While in this subject, I shall be content if  
 I state two maxims, one of which will serve  
 to show that coercion is not the true method of  
 securing that prompt and cheerful obedience  
 which is so desirable and essential a portion of  
*Discipline.*

A young man, the son of a highly respect-

able gentleman in Yorkshire, left his home in consequence of some domestic differences, and in the heat of his passion enlisted. Though it was evident his heart was not with the service, yet his general conduct was good. He had not been with the regiment above six months when, for a trifling neglect, he was sentenced to receive one hundred lashes. On the day appointed for their infliction, the men were paraded, and the youth was brought to the halberts and tied up. The degrading nature of the punishment he was about to undergo, seemed to affect him more than the agony which would necessarily attend upon it. He entreated, he implored most earnestly, that pardon might be granted to him. He stated who he was, and that he had in a fit of anger left his father's house, and entered the army. His prayers, however, were of no avail; the command was given to proceed, and his head sunk upon his bosom. He looked the very personification of despair. The drummer prepared his instrument of torture, and his arm was already uplifted to inflict the first lash, when its action was suspended by the voice of the colonel. "Stop!"

cried he. The cat was immediately lowered. He advanced to the prisoner, and addressed him in a most feeling and impressive manner, pointing out to him the consequences of his offence, which, though trivial in itself, yet being subversive of order, would lead to the commission of others of greater magnitude. The poor lad listened attentively to every word that was said, and seemed much affected. His commander concluded by telling him that his punishment was remitted, and he was immediately taken down. He afterwards proved one of the brightest soldiers in the regiment, and this humane colonel, in marking his subsequent exemplary conduct, has experienced a degree of pleasure to which the heart of the tyrant is ever a stranger.

Among the many instances of cruelty with which my reminiscences furnish me, I can at intervals recall to mind an act of humanity, which, shining out like a meteor in the midst of surrounding gloom, seems more bright from the very rarity of its occurrence. At Chatham once, a young soldier was sentenced to receive three hundred lashes. His father, a neighbouring farmer, heard of the circumstance, and immedi-

ately hurried to the colonel of the regiment. He prayed and entreated for his son's pardon, but to no purpose. He even went upon his knees, and begged that mercy might be extended to his boy, but the colonel remained inflexible. After listening to the farmer's expostulations for some time, he suddenly exclaimed, "All you can say is to no purpose: if he were my own son, I would flog him." "But he is mine!" imploringly cried the afflicted parent. The simple pathos of this short sentence had an instant effect upon the commander. He seized the farmer's hand. "My good man," said he, "make yourself happy. You have prevailed; your son shall not be flogged." The release of the young man was immediately ordered. I had not an opportunity of observing the effects of this leniency of the colonel, for the object of it had his discharge purchased immediately after by his father. The colonel was a brave man, but such an act as this does more honour to his name than all the laurels which he may have won in the field.

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## CHAPTER IV.

It is a circumstance much to be regretted, that the generality of young officers bear themselves towards the men under their command with too much of contumelious disrespect. The effects of such a line of conduct, I have slightly glanced at in a preceding chapter. What in truth, is the difference between the commissioned officer and the private soldier? Simply that which exists between various individuals in every state of society, the difference resulting from the necessary distinctions of rank. The feeling which prompts to the improper line of conduct of which I complain, is not confined to the officers of the army. There is a sort of odium attached to the name of common soldier which is felt more or less through every ramification of society. The real cause of this impression may be traced to the degrading liability to flogging with which the condition of the last named individual is marked. Until you exempt

him from this, it will be vain to expect from the soldier of Britain, that high sense of honour, and that pride of feeling and of bearing, by which the private in the ranks of the French army is so eminently distinguished. In that service, every soldier thinks that his situation is more honourable than that of the mechanic or the labouring peasant. He has a good opinion of himself, and we see its outward result in a free manly carriage; and its effect on the mind in a nice sense of what is due to him as a man and a soldier. The French officer uniformly addresses his men with that becoming, but at the same time distant, politeness, which is ever sure to obtain a return of respect. The habit which is so common in many of our regiments, of habitually applying epithets, such as would be deserved only by wretches the most debased, is totally unknown amongst them. How frequently do we hear a beardless boy, who has but just escaped from the confinement of his mother's apron-string, calling out, "Here, you Fellow!" or "you Blackguard!" or "you Rascal!" (any of these polite terms will suit him), to a veteran who was fighting his country's battles probably



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before Mr. Ensign was born. Must it not be gall and wormwood to the hoary-headed soldier, to hear himself addressed in such a manner, by a stripling who has yet to learn the commonest rudiments of his duty? One, who in entering the army, fancies he may domineer over a soldier, and address him in the same coarse language, as he has been accustomed to make use of to his footman and groom. If young subalterns do not know how to set an example of good breeding to their men, they ought to be taught to do so by peremptory orders from the proper quarters.

As though the private and officer were not already far enough separated in feelings and habits, a change has lately crept into the army, which, by increasing that distance, bids fair to annihilate what few dregs of good feeling remain between them. I allude to the circumstance of young men in the acquirement of a knowledge of their duty, availing themselves of the *private* instructions of the drill serjeant, or the serjeant major, instead of abiding by the old and more regular practice:—as if, forsooth, their patrician persons would receive contamination from

the touch of a man in the ranks. The excellent custom of obliging young officers to go through their initiatory drills in company with the men whom they are destined to command, still prevails, I believe, in the Guards, and a few other regiments.

I will just glance at another circumstance, and that not one of the least important of which, I think, the private soldier may justly complain: I mean the unequal distribution of prize money. That it is in a great measure to the boldness, the energy, and the unflinching constancy of the private soldier, that a general has been indebted for his victorious entry into a wealthy citadel, many a breach piled with dead, and many a bloody rampart, have borne ample testimony. I would ask, if the ensign's efforts on such an occasion, could possibly be in proportion to the enormous sum which he receives compared with the private? No man in his senses will venture to assert such a thing. Why then should the latter who has fought and bled to acquire it, receive but a mere trifle in comparison with the former? This, I confess, is a question that has often puzzled me, both

when I was a private, and since. That some regard should be paid to the gradations of rank I admit, but so great a disproportion as this, seems to be both inconsiderate and unjust.

In the course of conversation, when I have been speaking of the insults and heart-burnings which the poor soldier is obliged to endure, I have frequently been asked similar questions to the following, "If a soldier conducts himself with propriety, how can he be persecuted? If he perform his duty with alacrity and cheerfulness, what room will there be for harassing or annoying him?" Enquiries like these, prove how little the community at large know of the life of a soldier, or of the internal economy of a regiment. It is not from the "pomp and circumstance" of public parade, or the imposing manœuvres of a review, that information is to be gained on this subject, even by the keenest observer. There are a thousand ways in which an officer may, if he be so inclined, harass and perplex the best man in his company. If the officer choose to say the man is dirty, though in truth he may be as clean as it is possible for him to be, he is sent to drill. It may be, that

the officer takes a fancy to call the man awkward. On parade, such little scenes as the following, are of common occurrence, "Hallo, sir! You are too far forward! Now, you're too far back. Dress up a little: that's too much. Send him to drill." It may be, that in endeavouring to make a man stand square, the frill of his shirt is pulled and disordered; this is afterwards observed, and drill for its being dirty is the consequence, no reply being suffered as to how it became so. Again, pushing up the right shoulder; depressing the left; at last, "Send this fellow to the awkward squad till he can learn to stand up like a soldier." Or, perhaps, thus, "Why doesn't that awkward rascal keep the step? Turn out your toes—keep your heels together! That's too much: now, d—n it, that's too little! Shoulders back; raise the right shoulder, lower the left. Keep your hands in their proper places, can't you?—Head up; body square to the front. A d——d stupid, troublesome dog, serjeant—send him to drill." At another time, "Point the toe; raise the leg. Why, this fellow waddles like a duck! Send him back to the goose-step."

These, and a hundred other like methods of ingeniously tormenting, are, I am sorry to say it, commonly resorted to by men whose education and habits should place them far above a paltry desire of annoying others, who possess feelings, it may be, as sensitive as their own. Perhaps the individual against whom these caprices are practised, is one whose bronzed and furrowed cheeks, and grey hair, are the registry of long and faithful service. And from whom do they emanate? In the generality of instances, from a lad, who, previous to his appointment, was probably never more than a mile from the fond arms of his doating mamma. However teasing it may be to an old soldier, or, in truth, to any being with the feelings of a man, to be open to insults to which he dare not reply, and to be the victim of a capricious power against which he has no appeal, such matters as the foregoing are but trifles when compared with the deeds of deep and damning cruelty, which have, in the course of service, come under my notice. It has often been said, and with truth, that one fact is worth a thousand arguments. Turn we then to the mention of a few instances

such as would hardly be credited, and which, for that reason, I should be fearful of submitting, were they not perfectly capable of proof. . .

In the years 1810-11, while I was a serjeant in the 24th Light Dragoons, then in India, there was in the hospital belonging to that regiment a lad named Sharpe. Although he was very young, he had formerly been discharged from the Cavalry *depôt* at Maidstone, as unfit for the service, on account of his being subject to fits. By some means he had contrived again to enter the service, and had joined the corps in Bengal. He slept on the next *cot* but one to mine, and one night he had a severe fit unknown to any of his sleeping comrades, in the incidental convulsions of which he had inflicted a number of bruises on his body and face. The next morning he was found to be very ill from the exhaustion consequent on his involuntary struggles. When the doctor came round, he affected to disbelieve the poor fellow's story, and (will it be credited?) actually ordered him *a quart of salt and water*, not as a remedy, but as a punishment. This nauseous potion he refused, upon which he was placed in confinement, and subse-

quently brought to a court-martial, where he was tried as a *skulker*. He was found guilty and flogged. The fits continued to attack him, and he was again and again punished for the same offence. At length, it being proved that the dreadful affliction with which it had pleased God to visit the poor creature was not to be flogged out of him, he was discharged, and ordered to proceed immediately to Calcutta, preparatory to his embarkation with the invalids to Europe. His weakened and lacerated frame sunk under the fatigue of the journey, and he died on the road. Had he survived, he had a tale of cruelty to relate, which would have astonished the world. Dead men tell no tales!

It happened about the same period, that there was another case in the hospital of a man subject to fits. The patient in this instance was advanced in years. His name was Matthews, and he had been frequently flogged to cure him of *skulking*, as it is termed. The cat-o'-nine tails forming no part of the *materia medica*, he continued as bad as ever, until at last his case was brought before the principal medical functionary at the station, who was sent for to decide

whether the man was actually subject to fits or not. This sapient and stony-hearted disciple of *Æsculapius* undertook, after much thought, to "cure him of his fits, *if he had any.*" The patient was removed into a small room at one end of the hospital, and there the doctor commenced his operations, which were completely in the style of the notorious St. John Long. He caused some caustic, or severe burning preparation, to be rubbed into the unfortunate man's back along the spine, from the junction of the neck along the whole extent of the dorsal vertebræ. The agony caused by the application must have been intensely excruciating, for the horrible shrieks, and, subsequently, as his strength decayed, the deep, long-drawn groans of the poor sufferer were indescribably dreadful. At times, during the application of the torture, the patient, or perhaps I ought to say victim, was in one of the paroxysms of his disorder, and then he seemed to be in a state of utter unconsciousness and insensibility. This barbarous course of treatment, which was performed merely by a cooly, or common black menial, was persevered in during some time, till the vital energies



of the man, unable to support such an extension of anguish, gradually withered away, and at last he died. I had the curiosity to go and examine the body. It presented an appearance more dreadful than any thing I ever beheld, and I have not been unaccustomed to sights of horror. The backbone protruded through a deep furrowed wound which had been caused by the before-named cruel application, while large portions of flesh on each side of it, were completely destroyed or eaten away.

- A short time after these events, the brother of one of the above mentioned individuals, was invalided, and about to return to England. He had frequently been heard to declare, that he would lay before the commander in chief, a full statement of the matters which I have just detailed. It so happened, however, that he also died, on his way to Fort William; and with his death, the circumstances seemed to be forgotten. It is possible, that in this world they might have been forgotten; but a day of reckoning and retribution may come hereafter; and if the wanton movers of this barbarous iniquity be still

on the earth, the thought must make them tremble.

I could multiply instance on instance of the same species of demon-like and unprovoked cruelty, at once revolting and contemptible.

There was in the regiment above mentioned, an old soldier, "a tried and brave one too," who had been in India many years. One day on riding drill, he begged permission to fall out of the ranks, in order that he might obey the urgent calls of nature. Permission was refused, and he was kept on the trot and gallop for a full hour after. When the drill was over, he was in such a state, as to be incapable of dismounting without assistance. He was lifted out of his saddle, and removed to the hospital. On the same day he died. I am sorry to add, that no inquiry or observation of any sort, followed this most disgraceful catastrophe.

These are by no means isolated instances culled and brought together with a view of making out a case. Such incidents have been, and are but too common, and I am pained to say, that they are generally suffered to pass over as matters of course.

From these facts, and those subjoined, the reflecting reader will draw his own conclusions. He will at once see that commanders are privileged with too much unrestricted power, and that when they are far removed from the surveillance of the public eye, there are few of them who fail to abuse it.

I make no apology for presenting the reader with the following letter, which appeared in the Despatch of the        of        1832. It proves that I have not been singular in my observations.

“If Angels tremble, 'tis at such a sight.”

*Horrible Case of Military Torture.*

MR. EDITOR—The zeal, ability, and benevolence, with which you have advocated the cause of the injured and oppressed, claim the admiration and gratitude of every feeling mind; and as you have been eminently instrumental in advancing the triumph of humanity over tyranny and oppression, I am induced to trespass on your attention, by stating a few facts, which will tend to illustrate the cruel and revolting system under which military discipline has been enforced in foreign climes; and show the extent to which

despotic power will go when uncontrolled by the force of public opinion. The circumstances I am about to record, took place in his Majesty's 24th Light Dragoons, then (1818) stationed at Caunpore, in the East Indies, in which corps I was serving in the rank of serjeant. We had in the regiment a very clever, well educated man, of the name of M'Indoe; his character was unimpeachable, and he had in every instance proved himself a good soldier. On the occasion of a private, for some alleged act of insubordination against his captain, being brought to a court-martial, M'Indoe undertook to conduct his defence, and, in consequence of his shrewdness and ability, the man was acquitted. This so incensed the mind of the captain against the former, that he addressed him on the parade in very violent terms, and concluded by telling him, that he was a d——d troublesome, officious fellow, and the first time he could "pin him, he should smart for it." Unfortunately for M'Indoe, an opportunity soon presented itself to the Captain of gratifying his vindictive feelings. About a month after, the regiment was out at a field day, when M'Indoe, riding in the rear rank, received a

severe kick from his front rank man's horse, which shattered the bone of his leg. The accident was, of course, immediately reported to the Captain, who inquired who it was. Being told it was M'Indoe, he ordered that he should not fall out, but go through the field day. The poor fellow accordingly remained in the field an hour after the accident, galloping about with his broken leg dangling in the stirrup. When the regiment was dismissed, he was taken to the hospital, where he remained under the surgeon's hands three months; but, from the delay in the first instance, and the aggravation of the injury, the bone was not properly set, but was contracted at the joint. However, he was discharged from the hospital and ordered to his duty, and being the next morning directed to ride, he found that he could not mount his horse; whereupon he was sent to the guard-house, and next day tried by a court-martial for disobedience. He was sentenced to 300 lashes, and one month's solitary confinement. M'Indoe received the whole of his lashes, and when the term of his imprisonment expired, was again ordered to his duty. He made a second attempt to mount, and was again

unsuccessful; he was tried a second time, and the like punishment awarded, with the exception of the confinement. The whole number of the lashes were repeated, and he again became an inmate of the hospital. Before his back was entirely healed, he was sent out, and a third time essayed to mount his horse. It was in vain he told the Captain that he could not straighten his leg; he was a third time subjected to the mockery of a court-martial, and this just and humane tribunal, deaf to his solemn protestations of inability to mount his horse, actually sentenced him to undergo the excruciating agony of 300 lashes for the third time! When he was tied up the last time, Colonel N. addressed some words to the poor man, about being a skulking fellow, &c. and alluded to the assistance he had rendered, by which the captain's revenge had been defeated. After this, a committee of surgeons were ordered to examine and report on M'Indoe's leg, when they pronounced him incapable of any further duty, and he was accordingly invalided, but before he reached Calcutta, on his way home, this poor persecuted fellow died.

Another instance I must mention. Three

men were in the hospital quite blind, from ophthalmia; who, to mitigate the intense agony of their sufferings, had drank a little arrack. When the surgeon visited them in the evening, he smelt the liquor, and reported them to the Colonel, who had them tried by a court-martial for disobedience of orders, and they were sentenced to 300 lashes each. The triangles were brought to the hospital, and the men led up to them by black Coolies, and received every lash. I remember one day observing a man pull out of his pocket (with his handkerchief) a couple of ball cartridges. On my asking him his reason for carrying such things about his person, he said, he kept them ready to use, in case he should ever be brought to punishment, that he might shoot himself before hand.

These things, Sir, require no comment from me. The honest heart feels more than language can express, and should you think proper to afford them a place in your candid and valuable Journal, I can only say, that the accuracy of my statement, I am ready to verify (if necessary) on oath. I beg leave to offer a word or two respecting Mr. Shipp, from whose book extracts

have so often been made.\* Mr. Shipp and myself were, for several years, comrades in the same regiment (24th Dragoons), and I am enabled to say, that his statements for truth may be implicitly relied on, I having been an eye witness of many of the transactions he has recorded. I must conclude, Sir, by observing, that in sending you these facts, I am actuated by no motive, but the spirit of truth, and a desire to assist in developing the pernicious effects of a system alike destructive of the moral energies of the soldier, and disgraceful to the national character.

SAM. PRITCHARD.

6, Bridge-row, Pimlico, July 11.

I have a perfect remembrance of the circumstances, to all of which I was witness; but those, like many other acts of brutality, I had forgotten amid the din of war, and busy and ever fluctuating scenes of a soldier's life. I should not have forgotten the poor blind, for on that now well remembered day, I wept for them:—poor fellows! they could not weep, for their eyes had been burnt out.

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\* The book alluded to, is the Author's pamphlet on *Military Flogging.*



## CHAPTER V.

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In pursuance of a motion made in the House of Commons, a return has been ordered of the number of lashes inflicted on soldiers within the last seven years. If the statement thus elicited have its foundation in strict truth, the result will be such as to strike with horror, even the most decided advocate for flogging. I once heard an old soldier, on whose veracity I could depend implicitly, assert, that in the regiment to which he belonged (the 1st Royal Scots) there were two men who had each in the course of service, received the terrible number of twenty-six thousand lashes. Within my own knowledge, a man named Buckley in the 22nd foot, received eight thousand, before he had been in the army quite three years. After this he was sent into a condemned regiment, and I have had no opportunity of learning what became of him ultimately. It is very certain, however, that pre-



vious to his first misdemeanour, he was a fine, spirited soldier.

A general officer, now living, was, while colonel of a regiment, notorious for having flogged nearly every one of his men. Several of the more humane among the officers, endeavoured from time to time, to reason him out of this cruel propensity. It was in vain, however; he continually replied, "Pshaw! Its a mere nothing. Boy's play! I should not mind taking a hundred or so myself." One of the captains who was present when he repeated this remark, observed, that if he were once to try such an experiment, he would never flog another man. Soon after this, in consequence I suppose of some further discussion on the subject, I was sent for to the colonel's quarters, when, by his own orders, I administered to him fifty lashes with a cat-o'-nine tails. He bore them without moving a muscle, but never after that day did he order any man to the halberts, if there was any possibility of avoiding it. I heartily wish, that every flogging commander would try a similar dose, and I have no doubt but it would be attended with the same result,

Those who feel for the honour of humanity, who can sympathize with the sufferings of their fellow men, will shudder at the details with which I have here presented them. Let us glance, for one moment, at the duties which the public have a right to expect from every private soldier. He must be prepared to encounter the storms and tempests of the ocean; the frigid colds of the north, and the burning heats of India. He is expected to be ready, at the trumpet's call, to quit home, kindred, friends, and all that is dearest to him; to sever "strong knots of love," and to go forth to fight for his country and his king. To enable him to do this with alacrity, he must have a mind replete with loyalty and heroism. And is it such a man as this, who, instead of being governed like a rational being, is to be beaten like a horse or an ass? Look at the soldier just returned from service. From Egypt, stone blind from the effects of the arid and burning sands of the desert. From Waterloo, maimed by the bullets of the French, to whom, for the honour of his country, he scorned to concede an inch of ground. From India, with a feeble suffering frame and shattered

constitution, more broken down by exposure to the vicissitudes of climates, than by the perils of war. View him thus, and then lash him like a slave. Turn to the field of battle. See his ardent and intrepid spirit, as in the charge he nobly struggles with the foe ! see his proud bosom exposed to meet the bayonet's point ! Regard the deep cut across his brow ! Then see him bleeding on the ground, and even when he imagines himself in the icy embrace of death, regardful only of his country's glory. See him thus—then flog him like a slave ! Think of the soldier's patient endurance of hunger, of thirst, and toils ; of the dreadful privations which he bears, even with cheerfulness. His face is bronzed with long and frequent exposure to the weather, and his locks have probably become grey in his country's service. His back alone has escaped unscarred by the enemy ; then why should it be polluted, torn, and lacerated by his own countrymen. Observe his well-knit, nervous arms ; they have often dealt out retribution on the foe :—think for a moment how they have been employed, and then bind them to the triangles. Regard the clear and steady glance of

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that eagle eye, which was never created to shed a tear save that of pity, then wring from it drops of agonizing shame, of hopeless helpless degradation !

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**CHAPTER VI.**

**SOLDIER!** The advice which I am about to give you, in this and some succeeding chapters, is not the ostentatious intrusion of an individual unacquainted with your situation and profession; it is the result of —— years experience. I am one of yourselves, and as such I shall write, making pretensions to no more than to give you a little wholesome admonition in a plain manner, which you cannot misunderstand, and with the motive of increasing your happiness, and, I sincerely hope, your prosperity. For myself, I have struggled through all the minor grades of the service, from the waddling drum boy up to the subaltern officer. The path which you now tread I too have trodden, and I know it to be a rugged one. Seductions and snares, griefs and disappointments, surround you on every side; and it requires your utmost caution and vigilance to enable you so to steer your course as to avoid them. In your career of ser-

vice, it will be your lot to meet with many masters, and these with dispositions as various as their faces. You will find among them the peevish, the irritable, the deceitful, the capricious, the artful and the tyrannical, each acting under the influence of his temper. In whatever way these peculiarities of your officers may affect you, it behoves you always to remember, that the first duty of a soldier is obedience, prompt and cheerful obedience. It should be your most strenuous endeavour, and you will find it to be to your advantage to act in such a manner, as shall conciliate the good will, nay, even force the respect, of those whom a voluntary act of your own has put in authority over you.

Never forget any portion of your duty, but do your utmost so to regulate your conduct, that it shall appear unexceptionable in the eyes of all your officers, and comrades, of whatever grade or description they may be. To those who have to make their way either to fame or distinction, as is the case with every soldier, a good character is no less essential than address and abilities.

Take no heed of the depravities of those with

whom you may come in contact; above all, let not the vices of your superiors, though they may appear somewhat of a brilliant nature, dazzle you by their specious glare into a desire of imitation.

Pursue a steady and virtuous path of your own, and although you move in an eccentric orbit, your conduct will for that very reason be but the more marked and respected; for you will find that however degenerate human nature may sink into viciousness, it usually retains a due sense of what is excellent. Even when a man has arrived at such a degree of depravity, that he has lost every wish to follow an upright course, he still cannot withhold his esteem from those whose integrity is unimpeached.

The vice which of all others I have observed to be the soldier's greatest bane, and against which I would use all my public eloquence to caution you, is the degrading one of drunkenness. Among all the diseases, the disasters, and the miseries which beset us in the course of our frail and transitory existence, there is not one in its tendency and nature more malignant and mischievous, or the source of greater evils, than drunk-



eness. It not only destroys health, and saps the foundation of a good constitution, but it deprives a man of that moral health and energy which exists in the mind, whereby his ambition, and all those better feelings which would stimulate him to reach at preferment, become dormant or actually dead within his mind. I pity the wretch which has given himself up to this vice, which at once reduces him beneath the level of a brute beast, scorching the vitals, overturning the reason, paralysing the nerves of industry, and giving even the ever-enduring soul to idleness. I have seen so many instances of the ill effects of intemperance, of the misery and degradation produced by it in the army, that it is the vice of all others, which I would most strongly recommend the soldier to avoid, even in a solitary instance.

I take it for granted, that every soldier wishes for promotion. That, he knows as well as I can tell him, depends upon his character and conduct; for it will not do to depend much upon favour, though, in some instances, it may do something. Now, I know from experience, that nothing detracts so much from a man's character

as the conviction that he is in the habit of getting drunk. A good character is not only of use in the point above specified, but it is a positive happiness to a man's self. It commands admiration in the bright hours of prosperity, and calls forth sympathy in the day of adversity. It establishes a solid foundation for esteem, and will ever pave the way for praise and promotion.

Even casual libations, if likely to lead to excess, I would caution the soldier to the decided and resolute avoidance of. The vice is of such a treacherous nature, and its influence is so predominant, when a man once becomes its victim, that if he has sense he will rather shun the danger. Yet, far be it from me to curtail the enjoyments of the soldier, to debar him altogether from the cup of mirth. I would only preach discretion in your potations. Choose proper times and seasons for your revels and festivities; and drink no more than is necessary to "make glad the heart." Before your parades, or where you have any duty to do, I would strenuously advise you to drink not at all of any thing inebriating. The stimulus may perhaps feel very pleasant, and you will probably take a little more, and then the next

step is, that more and more seems necessary, so that by the time you reach your post, you are absolutely drunk, and you are aware of the consequent misery which such a circumstance entails upon you. If you have any regard for your health, for your comfort, for your substance, for your time, for your character, or for your eternal welfare, above all things let me advise you to be temperate.

It is a point of the utmost importance to every private soldier, that he should be possessed of a strong wish to gain the esteem and approbation of his superiors, and the good-will and affection of his equals. The desire of being pleased is universal: the desire of pleasing should be so too. It is a virtue which is included in that universal moral apophthegm, "Do unto others as you would they should do to you." There are indeed duties of a higher, but none of a more amiable, nature. True benevolence goes to a greater extent than mere austere morality: it prompts us to contribute what we can to the ease, amusement, and pleasure of our fellow creatures as far as we innocently may. The person who manifests an earnest desire to please those around him; places his

stock of merit, however small it may be, at great interest. The man who is anxious to please will make people in general wish him well, and they will be inclined to serve him in any thing that is not inconsistent with their own interest. To those who are your superiors, your desire to please them will be best shewn by an alacrity to obey their wishes and commands, and by an earnest endeavour to act up to what your duty requires of you. To conciliate the good will of your equals, behave to them in every respect as if you had their interest at heart; and the best way to achieve this, is to school yourself into the real possession of such a feeling. By perseverance, a man of true fortitude may gain the mastery over all the bad propensities and feelings of his nature. Too great familiarity I would not by any means advise. The old adage is right, which says, that it breeds contempt. Be kind, be obliging:—but at the same time remember, that the first step towards rising in the estimation of others, is to convince them by your behaviour, that you esteem yourself. Politeness is the just medium between form and rudeness. It is the consequence of a benevolent

nature, which shews itself to general acquaintance in an obliging, unconstrained civility, as it does to more particular ones in distinguished acts of kindness. This good nature must be cherished by a justness of sense, and a quickness of discernment, that knows how to use every opportunity of exercising it, and to proportion the instances of it to every character and situation. It is a restraint laid by reason and benevolence upon every irregularity of temper, which, in obedience to them, is forced to accommodate itself, even to the fantastic cases which custom and fashion have established, if by these means, it can procure in any degree the satisfaction or good opinion of any part of mankind; thus paying an obliging deference to their judgment, so as it is not inconsistent with the higher obligations of virtue and religion.

From the continued fluctuations of rank, there is perhaps no feeling more dangerous to a soldier than that of envy. It generally goes hand in hand with detraction, and they are the parents of falsehood. I would have you to remember that the very name of soldier would imply that you are an honourable man. Be resolute then, never

to cast a stain upon that name, or upon yourself as a man, by uttering that which is not true. A man who has no virtue in himself, will always envy the appearance of it in another; for the minds of men will either feed upon their own good, or upon the evil of others. It would seem that whoever is hopeless of reaching the height of virtue to which another has attained, will next endeavour to lower that other in the estimation of his neighbours. All such base passions, and motives of action should be expunged from the breast of a soldier, as by warping his mind from more noble objects, they will for ever hinder him from pursuing the right path to preferment. Detraction is among those vices which the most languid may have sufficient force to prevent, if the reason be allowed a little sway, because by detraction that is not gained which is taken away.

“He who filches from me my good name,” &c.  
The practice of detraction, therefore, will infer for the want of virtue. It is a meanness to which no brave man will stoop, though it is habitual to cowards. If then you esteem it an honour to be called brave, avoid detraction as one of the worst of evils.

sown, and when fostered by indulgence grow to such a height and ascendancy, requires more than human power to eradicatethem. Let me then caution you, and I do not unadvisedly, to guard against its first approaches; for it will poison your mind, and render you miserable. Such a train of reflections as the following will be useful in assisting you to keep down this degrading passion:—It is possible we have mistaken the motives from which the conduct that offends us proceeded. We often have our own offences been the effect of inadvertence, when they were construed into indications of malice. It may be, that our adversary is suffering under a contrition which he is ashamed to own, or wants opportunity to confess. How ungrateful, in such a case, to be provoked!

particularly, for too many think themselves bound to keep alive their indignation, even when they find it dying away beneath the predominance of their better nature. We should remember that others have their prejudices, their hopes and fears, their interests, their passions, their sudden impulses, and their varieties of apprehensions as well as ourselves. We may recollect what has sometimes passed in our own minds when we have been on the wrong side in a quarrel, and imagine our adversary to be pursuing a similar train of thought. We can recall what palliations we created for ourselves, when we became sensible of our misbehaviour, and how naturally we expected others to extend the same good will to us. How highly in such case, of a tender apology, we appreciated the superiority of a generous reception, and ready forgiveness, and how deeply we felt the kindness of it. How, on the contrary, persecution has revived our malevolent spirit and our enmity together, and seemed to justify that conduct in ourselves, which we before blamed. Add to this the indecency of anger. Think of the inconveniences and irretrievable misconduct into which our iras-



tibility has sometimes betrayed us; the friendships it has lost us, and the sore repentance which on one account or other it always brings. It would be well if you would habituate yourself to these reflections, till they rise spontaneously in your mind, whenever you receive an injury or an affront; ponder upon them till they have not only the effect of mitigating your anger at the time, but of effecting a radical change in your temper and disposition.

Above all things, accustom yourself to frequent self-examination, and when you find this or any other noxious weed springing up in your bosom, crush it in the bud. Destroy the canker-worm ere it has wrought mischief. The best and only method of preventing the growth of bad and dishonourable thoughts and propensities, is to provide for yourself some useful and instructive employment, whereby idleness, the parent of evil, will be utterly avoided. For this purpose, there is nothing better than diligent reading. This may be at first an irksome employment, if you have not been accustomed to it; but when you find yourself soaring in mental capability above your fellows, it will soon consti-

tute one of your pleasures with which you would be most loath to part. Your mind will, by this means, become stored with a fund of knowledge, which, beside increasing your intelligence and thereby rendering you less liable to error, will be a resource in many a solitary hour, when you have not even a comrade to converse with you. If you imbibe a fondness for reading, you will never, during your moments of leisure, want occupation of a wholesome kind, such as will tend to your benefit both here and hereafter. In place of the canteen or the alehouse, where you will waste your money, and lay the foundation of innumerable evils, you will be able to pass your time in your barracks, free from the cares and inquietudes, which are invariably attendant on an idle and vicious life. You will be conscious of having acted up to the dignity of your nature, and from that consciousness will result a serene complacency, which, though not so impetuous, is far superior to all animal pleasures. Your mind will be in a state of continual progression, still making new acquirements, and still animated with the hope of attaining to greater excellence.

...versation: whatever is incon-  
with the highest dignity of our nature, sh-  
no means be tolerated. As companion  
only the duty which we owe to ourselv-  
that which we owe to others, is required  
Individuals who can indulge their vices in  
other's presence, must have become obdun-  
guilt and insensible to infamy.

Cultivate within your mind a spirit of  
lation, for that quality has always ranked a-  
of the most laudable exertions of the hu-  
powers. It is the strongest auxiliary in-  
ment to the attainment of excellence, and i-  
acknowledged importance we are indebted  
great degree for all that is quoted as exam-  
for our imitation in every pursuit. The  
who is not possessed of emulation who --

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**CHAPTER VII.**

I have observed, that in the course of your career, it is your lot to become subject to men of various dispositions. I will now endeavour to give you such general directions with regard to conduct, as shall seem best calculated to enable you to gain the notice, the confidence, and the approbation of him, under whose command the chances of service may place you.

If your superior officer be of an irritable disposition, be you calm and respectful. Be continually on your guard, that no sudden flash of his temper, may fret you into a similar impatience, or rouse you into indignation. If you continually meet the irruptions of his fretfulness with a cheerful quietness, you will completely overcome the effects of his irascibility, and cannot fail, in time, to gain his good will. Men whose general feelings are mild and humane, are frequently most subject to these sudden ebullitions of violence. It is evident, therefore,

that the proper part to act is that which will call forth the better feelings of his nature, whereby you will, probably, avoid all the effects of his anger. If, in the violence of his excitement, he descend to the use of abusive language towards you, never allow your feeling of resentment to overcome you so far as to induce a reply. In his cooler moments he will feel that he has wronged you; for most men have a spirit within which twinges them when they have, in a moment of excitement, stooped to do injury to the feelings of an innocent person, and your patient endurance will shew him the impropriety of his conduct in the strongest light: whereas, by replying, you would not only render yourself liable to punishment, but the evil would be increased by your goading his temper to a greater extremity. To injure any being is morally wrong; to forgive is divine, and in your case politic. Act then the better part.

Military law is like the spider's web which catches the smaller and weaker flies, but permits the larger and more powerful to escape. Bear this in mind.

Should your officer be a strict disciplinarian,

you will best ensure his favourable consideration by a strict performance of your duty. This will be noticed, and you will reap the benefit of it. Never for a moment allow yourself to believe that your duty is burdensome; if you do, the very thought will render it irksome, and you thus increase the burthen, whereas cheerfulness will lighten it of half its weight. If you bend your views the proper way, that is, towards the achievement of preferment, your duty ought to be your delight. Almost every man, let his situation in life be what it may, has his own peculiar hobby: Indulge him on that subject, and you will gain his good will. A rigid exaction of duty is the hobby of the disciplinarian; and prompt obedience and strict performance will ensure his favour, and your reward will be promotion and indulgence.

If your officer be one of those tyrannical individuals who take delight in oppressing and harassing their men, act in such a manner as to leave nothing in his power. This will require your utmost vigilance and caution, but it is necessary to your own happiness and well-being, probably through life. A steady perseverance

in good conduct, will in time oblige him to conquer his evil disposition at least as far as regards you, for it will seem to convince him, that you are not one of those on whom he may freely indulge the vindictive feelings of his nature. Should he find fault without occasion, remember that it is part of the prerogative with which custom has allowed him to be invested, and that it is your duty patiently to submit. This may be galling and heart-rending, but a little calm reflection will tell you, that it is preferable to intemperate retort, the inevitable consequence of which, is degradation and torture.

When such a man addresses you uncourteously, close your ears: the bitter words are his, not yours. They reflect more discredit on him who willingly utters, than on him who reluctantly hears them. Should he so far forget his gentlemanly feeling as to make use of disgusting epithets, bear in mind that they attach no disgrace to you. In his hour of reflection he will not fail to discover this, and the patience which you have evinced will have the effect of subduing his virulence for the future, and it may be that you may gain his esteem and favour.

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**CHAPTER VIII.**

There is one point on which I would especially caution you, as nothing will prove a greater stumbling-block in your path to preferment. It is capable of calling forth the worst feelings of your officers, whereby they may be induced to use the ample powers with which they are invested, to make your life miserable. Avoid becoming the advocate of those who are discontented. You will find in every regiment a number of evil-minded grumbling men. Let no circumstance induce you to join them, or to do any thing whereby you may appear to be identified with them. A man of lively faculties will frequently find the monotony of a soldier's life extremely irksome to him. He is willing to find excitement in any thing that offers, and if he be possessed of talent, he is very likely to be sought after by the class whom I have named. By them he is led to state grievances, to write petitions against officers, and to render himself obnoxious in a thousand ways, by mixing him-



self up in matters with which he has no concern. Let not this be your case. You will find it matter of difficulty enough to keep clear of the snares and machinations which beset your own path, without unnecessarily running into those which do not lie in your way. He is a good soldier who properly minds his own duties and concerns. A man who listens to the tale of every discontented, grumbling individual who endeavours to gain his attention, will soon find that he will not long continue a passive hearer only: he will be led insensibly to indulge the same feelings, and will soon become equally dissatisfied. It is well known to every military reader, that there are many men who act as a sort of secretaries to their comrades, who may not be as well educated as themselves. They are commonly called "soldier lawyers." It is a sort of character which I would advise you to avoid, even the remote suspicion of. Such men breed more mischief than even that queen of gossip, the drum-major's wife, who is commonly the mother of scandal, and the foundation of all the low tattle of the regiment. If you see that a set of men by their impudence and discontent are

getting themselves into disgrace, let experience work its effect upon them. The lesson is calculated to do them more good than your interference: let every man fight his own battles. It is a duty which you owe to yourself, to use every legitimate means to gain the favour and esteem of your officers. It is in their power to render your life one of happiness or misery. It is easy for you to become a party in a matter in which you have no personal interest, but it is not so easy for you to clear yourself from its consequences, as the following instance will prove.

It once happened that a very intelligent young fellow, whom I will call A. B., undertook as a mere act of kindness, at the earnest solicitation of a comrade, to write to the colonel a representation, that the captain had unlawfully detained some part of the complainant's pay. Upon investigation, the captain clearly established his innocence, and the petitioner was brought to a court martial, for having made an unfounded charge against his superior officer. On trial, he at once, as his only subterfuge, denied having written the letter to the colonel, and declared

that it was written by A. B. without his consent. A. B. was immediately sent for, and on being questioned, he acknowledged that he had written the petition, but he declared that it was at the earnest entreaty of the prisoner. This, the latter strenuously denied, and insisted that it was the sole act of the other, without any instigation or approbation from him whatever. The poor scribe now found, that he was placed in a very awkward predicament; for he could not deny his own writing. He was brought to a court martial, convicted, and sentenced to receive two hundred lashes, which was afterwards commuted to seven days' confinement in the black hole. During his imprisonment, he had ample leisure to reflect upon the folly of which he had been guilty, nor did he ever from that time embroil himself in another man's discontents. Let this be a warning.

As the result of my own experience, I would strongly impress upon you the importance of the following rules of conduct :

Accord always a prompt and cheerful obedience to the orders of your superiors. It is the very basis of discipline.

Adopt a kind and conciliatory deportment towards all those with whom you may have any intercourse. This you will find conducive to your interest as well as your happiness.

Should you be uneducated, lose no time in improving yourself. Acquire as much learning as you possibly can, for you cannot have too much. It will perhaps be well to direct the strongest energies of your mind to those branches which are most essential to your profession. If you look forward to the attainment of rank, you ought to be a soldier theoretically as well as practically. If you doubt of your ability to take a high flight, learn at least to read your Bible well. In it you will always find not only instruction, but pleasure and recreation. In time of need, it will prove a friend more faithful even than your dearest comrade. This will lead to a taste for more general reading, which, once acquired, will ever prevent the time from hanging heavily on your hands.

If you have received the blessing of a liberal education, if in addition to this, you feel that you possess talent and genius, let not either vanity or the thoughtlessness of ostentation

prompt you to pervert those gifts to improper uses. In every community there will be found men whom no state of things will content. It is not the province of a sensible well educated man to stand forward as the champion of such as these. Such individuals look only on the dark side of things. Avoid all such persons, for discontent is contagious. It is possible that you may see things which are capable of emendation, but I entreat you to remember that you are not in a situation that allows you the power of making the least alteration. It is better therefore to keep tranquil on such subjects, and not to use your superior mental qualifications to stir up discontent in the minds of those who are not gifted with the same reasoning powers. Though you are a private soldier, remember that

“ Honour and shame from no condition rise ;  
Act well your part, there all the honour lies.”

The motives of your officers are not to form subject for the exercise of your opinions. In every thing lawful you are bound to obey them. In their public conduct, their private character or their vices, you have nothing to do. Above all things, meddle not ostensibly with


the politics of the nation. Your duty confines you to a strict obedience to all law civil and martial. To this you are bound by your oath of allegiance. You are of course at liberty to form your own opinions of passing events, but so long as ever you remain in the service, and receive pay as a soldier, keep them to yourself. You will find no difficulty in applying your talents to much better purposes than the study and promulgation of your political views. It will be more beneficial to you to improve yourself in your profession. Let that be the end and aim of your efforts, and leave the good order and government of the realm to those who make such matters their sole occupation and study.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### HORSE GUARDS, &c.

It must frequently have struck every person of reflection, as a serious obstacle that there should be no easily accessible means by which the friends and relations of the private soldier can ascertain what his fate may be, whether he be dead or alive. It is a hard case, that any individual should be obliged to labour under any sort of uncertainty on such a subject. Suspense is frequently more painful than the dread certainty of misfortune. The death of every officer is published to the world either through the medium of the Gazette, or some of the military obituaries of our periodicals. When a private soldier dies, the circumstance of his demise is inserted in the regimental returns, which find their way to the Horse Guards. How difficult it is to get a sight of these returns the following narrative will shew. Now, it would be the easiest thing imaginable for a list of these returns



to be published monthly, quarterly, or even yearly, whereby they would soon involve themselves with the staple news of the country, and have their corner in every newspaper as regularly as the prices of stocks.

Strange things come under our cognizance at times. I have often had my attention attracted to the subject of the vexatious and frivolous delays which frequently occur at the Horse Guards, where every facility of information ought to be accorded. It was at a period when I was much immersed in the subject, that as I was journeying through the county of Suffolk, I met with a fine old fellow of a farmer, who, after a little conversation, I found had had occasion to visit the Horse Guards a short time previously. He gave me the following narrative, which as he told it with some humour, I shall give as nearly as I can recollect *verbatim* in his own language.

*The Farmer's Visit to the Horse  
Guards.*

Yo' see sur, our son John had went for a



sojer some years sin', and he was sent away directly with his ridgement to the East Hinges or some other foreign parts beyond the seas. We was for a long time very much fretted that we had heard nou't o' him. We did'nt know where we could make any enquiries, till I one day asked an old sojer who was passing through the village, if it were possible to gain any tidings of him. He said there was only one place where I had any chance of getting information, and that was at the Horse Guards i' Lunnon. Well, that wor a long way to go, so I thou't I would think about it a little bit. Howsomever, our dame had a queer dream about un one night and nou't would do but I mun go up to Lunnun to find out all about un. Now, the stage coach comes through our village, and on the top of it I mounted one night. It wor tarnation could. A hard frost had set in, and the snow fell thick during the whole night. When daylight comed the top o' the coach wor covered wi' snow, and there we were, labouring along the white turnpike, the horses smoakin wi' the fatigue. The little merry robin hopped about from twig to twig, and the noisy sparrows wor crowded into

the shelter of the farm yards, and as we rolled silently past the houses, icicles as big as daggers hung from the heavens. Every thing looked cold and comfortless. By degrees, my mind turned from these things, and I thought o' my lad hundreds o' miles from home, toiling so might be under a burning sun. Wi' such ideas as these, my anxiety was raised to a great pitch. I thou't we should never be at Lunnon. At last however we comed there. Coach stopped at Mrs. Nelson's an' I got down, an' soon had the pleasure o' warming myself at a rousin' fire. Though I wor much fatigued, I did not sleep sound that night. I could think o' nou't but our Jack, and wonder what tidings I should have to carry back to my ou'd wife. I soon got up an' tried to eat some breakfast, but my thoughts wor sore troubled an' I could not eat. I stopped more than once in my walk and would ha' gone whoam again, but I thought as how it wor best to know the worst at once. I had a good deal o' trouble to find my way, an' I saw things that in any other state o' mind would a made me dumb wi' astonishment, but as it was, all my thou'ts were taken up wi' one thing. Well at

last I came to the Horse-Guards, and I axed for the Secretary in War's office as I had been toald. They shewed I the door an' I ringed at the bell, but as there wor no answer, I knocked, and rang agsin a little bit louder. All on a sudden bang open went the door, an' a chap wi' powdered hair, looking quite big, said, "Hallo, Mr. Bumpkin, what the d—l do you mean by knocking and ringing in this kind of way?" I thought it had been his lordship himself." "May be as good a man" said I. "Well, well, what do you want?" "Why, says I, I want to see the Secretary in War." "Then you must come to-morrow, his lordship's not in town." "What time o' day mun I come?" "Seven o'clock," says he, and slaps too the door. This, I think, was scarcely civil treatment, however I went away, and next evening I called again at seven o'clock. I knocked and ringed as I had done afore, an' after awhile another powdered chap wi' a great goold headed stick came, an axed I what I wanted. "The Secretary in War," said I. "Then you mun come to-morrow at twelve," and wi' that he banged too th' great door in my teeth and had like to ha' knocked me

down. Well, thinks I to myself, here be some o' your Lunnon manners. However, I comed again next day at twelve as he had tou'd me, an' then I wor informed that his lordship would not be in till four, and ma' be not then. Well, thinks I to myself, I'll try to get in an' get to know from somebody else, so I pushed for'ard, and the chap did not stop me, so I says to him, "Pray, friend, what might the Secretary get for keeping poor folk a dancing arter him in this here way." The chap stared at me as if he'd never seed a man afore, and said, "That's a curus question: "Why, £10,000, or £20,000 a year perhaps, or thereabout." "I thinks, said I, as how I pays a part o' that, and it would be right for un to do my little bit o' job for me." "Well, (says the chap, quite saucy-like) and what's your bit o' job, Mr. Clodpole?" "Why, (says I) I just wants to ax him, if my son John as is in foreign parts be 'live or not." "Oh, is that all? (says he) that's easily managed. But come, it will cost money though." "How much?" says I. "Oh, ten shillings or so." "Well, well, I doant mind, if I stand that for his lordship." "Come at twelve o'clock to-morrow then, and

I'll see about it." He wor a going to shew I out, when down stairs comes a man all over goold lace, and a great feather in his hat. He looks at me, an' I says at once to un, "May hap you be the Secretary in War. I ha' summut to ax your honour." "You are mistaken, my good man, (said he, quite as civil as could be, and clean different to t'other powdered chaps) the Secretary is at Cheltenham, and will not be back until Friday, perhaps later. What is your business with him?" I soon tell'd that. "Go up stairs, (said he) and knock at that door." So I did you may be sure, and by gum, but I gied it a real good thump. "Come in," said some one with a voice like a woman. In I went, and there I seed a little chap stuck up in a cubbord wi' a pen growing out o' his ear. I made my bow, an' said, "Good morning, sir!" "Good morning, my man, (says he) what's your business?" "Why sir, (says I) the nater o' the thing is this. My son John he's a soger in foreign parts, in the — regiment. He's been away a long time, and our missus and I canno' rest till we know whether he be's dead or alive." "You must go to Mr. M." (said he) up two pair of stairs.

When you get to the top, you must first turn to the right, and then to the left, then you will be in a long passage, and at the end of it there is a door, knock at it and enquire for him." I made another bow, and away I went. When I comed to the door, they told me Mr. M— was on the next floor, third door on the left hand. Up I went, but I might as well have stayed where I was. Mr. M— they told me wor in Brighton, and they did not know when he would come back. So I stood to rest mysen a bit, an' a little snip o' a chap says to me quite snappish like, "Well, why doesn't the fellow go? You must come back and enquire for Mr. M— in three or four days, and may be you will be able to see him." I was quite out o' spirits wi' this, an' away I went down, but somehow, what wi' one long passage and another, turning to the right and left, I became for all the world quite bothered like; I could no' find my way out. While I wor wonderin what I should do, I saw a parler on the right hand wi' the door open, an' a fine rousin fire within. It wor a bitter could day, so I went in an' sat down to warm mysen. I had just took up a newspaper from

the table, when a little dandy chap wi' long curly hair an' a thin waist, came dancing in upon his toes. I got up, wanting to be civil and pur-lite like. "Good morning, sir," says I. With that, he put up a round glass to his eye, and peeped at I through it. After he had done this a goodish while he said, "Who the devil are you, sir, and what do you want?" I wor a bit vexed, so I said, "Why, zur, I be an honest man, rather scarce things here i' Lunnon, I'm thinking." "What's your business, fellow? I want none of your insolence, so be brief. I haven't time to waste on such bumpkins as you." I told him what I be'd come for, so he said, "This is the wrong office. Go up three pair of stairs, and ask for Mr. P—." Away I went again, an' precious tired I wor. When I got to the top o' the house, I met an ou'd woman. "Pray, dame (said I) do you happen to be the Secretary in War?" The ou'd woman stared, but made no answer. "No offence to the Secretary, dame (said I) but I wish you had his pay for a year; I dare say, you could contrive to do his business. But, can you tell me where I can find Mr. P—." "Mr. P—! Lord bless

you, sir ! (said the old dame) why, he's on the ground floor, at No. —." Well, away I went down stairs again, and by good luck, I soon found No. —. Mr. P— was gone out of town. Could not tell when he would be at home, but the gentleman at next door could tell me about my son. I went to him, and he sent me to the gentleman opposite. When I came to him, he had done business for the day, and tell'd I to call next day. With that away he walks, an' leaves I all alone. Soon after, the chap as I seed the first day, come'd and told I to turn out, for he was just a going to shut up. He seed I to the door, and as I wor a going out wi' a heavy heart, says he, "Please to remember the porter." I didn't see as he had done any thing to deserve any o' my money, so I took no notice. I hadn't time to get well out however, before the chap bangs to the door in such a hurry, that my foot catch'd in the mat, and away I went head foremost into the street. The people all burst into a laugh. "More o' your Lunnon manners," said I. While I was a rubbing off the dirt, a tall gentleman in an officer looking coat, rather wornish or so, claps I on the back,



and says, "Never mind, my good fellow, you are not the first honest man that has had a fall at the Horse Guards." By gum, thinks I, that looks a good natur'd chap, may be he can tell me summat about how I shall proceed, for I can't go back to dame as I am. So I run after him. He stopped in a minute, and I told him every thing. "What's your son's name?" said he. "John Ashton, sir," said I. He looked quite astonished. Of what regiment? I told him. "Ha! (said he) that is very singular. Come with me, and I will give you some intelligence. I have just come from India myself." With that, he led me away up one street an' another, till we came to a grand inn, where he took I into a nice pretty little room. He rung the bell and spoke to the waiter who went away, and presently a soldier marched in and stood as stiff as a post. "Have the detachment of invalids arrived?" asked the gentleman. "Yes, about an hour since." "Can you find Serjeant Ashton?" "Yes!" "Then go and bring him here instantly." Well, I was bewildered, you may be sure. Serjeant Ashton! What could he mean. I made bould to ax him. He filled out

a glass o' wine, and bid me drink it, an' not be curus, for I should soon know. After awhile, in comes the sojer, followed by another. I looked, an' begun to feel queerly, for it looked like somebody as I'd seen afore, an' then I caught the turn o' the eyes, an' the twist o' the head, and I saw that it was Jack himself, but so altered! He wor as stiff as a poker, an' as thin too. An' his skin was as yallow as a marygold. He never looked at I, but stood wi' his legs close together, an' his hand at his forehead, lookin at the gentleman. "Do you know this old man?" said he. Jack then turned his head to mé. I could hould no longer. "Jack, (said I) doesn't thee know thy old feyther." Well, Jack jumped as tho' he had been struck. An' then he flew to me, and we shook hands, an' axed questions, an' laughed, and cried all in a breath. At last, Jack remembered the gentleman, and turned round an' axed pardon. He wor laughin and rubbin his hands, an' seemed as much pleased as we wor. "Serjeant Ashton, (said he) you have leave to go home with your father, an' I'll take care to procure it to the extent of three months." Jack thank'd him, and so did I. He was a fine

generous fellow, an' Jack told me as how he was a colonel, who had come over in command of the invalids. Well, our missus was finely astonished, when astead o' merely bringing news of Jack, I brout Jack himsel; but if I hadn't happen'd to find him, or if he'd a died in foreign parts, I shouldn't a been much wiser for my visit to the Horse Guards.

## CHAPTER X.

I would not wish it to be understood by the foregoing narrative, that every application at the Horse Guards is attended by exactly similar results. But the difficulty in all cases is sufficiently great. It is easy to conceive what a task it would be to a poor unlettered man, a labourer for instance, in a distant part of the country, to ascertain how he ought to proceed, to get any information he requires, which in a case similar to the foregoing, as I have before stated, can be got only at the Horse Guards. I need scarcely say, that poor men are endowed with feelings in every respect as powerful as those of the rich. Perhaps I shall not err, if I state, that the affection of consanguinity is more strongly felt among the humbler classes, than it is amongst those who move in higher circles. The poor man's comforts, his hopes, and many of the best feelings of his nature, are settled in his kindred.

It is a well known fact, that the private sol-

dier, or the non-commissioned officer, seldom dies in debt. He frequently leaves a small sum of money behind him. This, if he be at a great distance from his home and friends, he knows of no method of having paid over to them on his demise. He, in consequence, generally bequeaths it to some comrade who has attended him on his bed of sickness. I have known many instances, in which individuals have received bequests of sums varying from £10 upwards, after having watched the last moments of a brother in arms, and smoothed his passage to that "bourne from whence no traveller returns."

About four or five years ago I addressed a letter to the Commander-in-Chief, setting forth some of what I conceived to be the existing evils, and recommending a plan for establishing a register of the names, &c. of all soldiers dying abroad, the amount realised by the property of which they might have been possessed, and the means by which the same might be recoverable. Some six months from the date of my letter, his lordship acknowledged its receipt. I have not heard any more

on the subject, and am therefore ignorant whether any thing has been done.

The details of the plan which I submitted to the consideration of his lordship were simple, and capable of being carried into execution at a very trifling expense, which might be more than covered by demanding a small fee from each person who availed himself of its advantages. Its object would be to place within reach of every man in the kingdom, the means of ascertaining at a trifling cost, whether any friend or relation whom he might have in the army were living or dead:—To facilitate the means by which, in the event of a soldier's death, his next of kin; in case he died intestate, or his legatees if he made a will, should be enabled to ascertain what property he had left, and the method of applying to receive the same.

The reader will be able to judge of the feasibility of the plan by the following details, which contain the substance of my letter to Lord Hill.

At the commencement of every year, by means of the regimental returns so far as the same had been received at the Horse Guards, a full and correct list should be compiled of the

deaths which had occurred in the army, both at home and abroad during the preceding year. For compactness and facility of reference, it should be in the tabular form—specifying under distinct heads the name of every deceased officer, non-commissioned officer, and private:—a description of his person, similar to that which is contained in the muster-roll of every regiment, the time and place of death, the amount of property realized by the appointed authorities, the place of deposit of such property, and the proper method of making application to recover the same. In order more firmly to establish the identity of an individual who had died abroad, it would be necessary to state, not only the number of the regiment to which he belonged at the time of his death, but also those of the different corps in which he might have served from the time of his leaving England. It might happen that a man's friends would receive a letter from him, while he was in one regiment, and that subsequent ones written after his removal to another might miscarry. Such things have happened frequently.

This list being made out, a sufficient number

of copies of it should be printed, that one might be sent to each county and borough town within England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. This document should be placed in the hands of the town clerk, or other proper officer, and every person desirous of referring to it, should be at liberty to do so, on payment of a fee of one shilling.

The benefit resulting from such a measure would soon be felt, and it is natural to suppose, that there would be scarcely a person who had a relation serving in any of our regiments abroad, who would not avail himself of the advantages of inspecting a table of this sort if it were placed within his reach. The very poorest individual would, at some time during the year, be able to visit the county or borough town next his place of abode. The number of shillings thus collected would be more than sufficient to pay the expense of framing and publishing the list, while the nature of the tax, if tax it may be called, would ensure its cheerful payment.

Before paying the amount of any soldier's estate, it would of course be necessary to make sure of the right of the person claiming. This





would be done in a manner similar to that which is practised in the case of seamen's wills. The knowledge of the place of each soldier's birth would be of service in preventing fraud, and it might be made a rule to state the parish to which each man belongs, opposite to his name in the muster roll of each regiment.

I trust I have, in this simple statement, said sufficient to convince the public, that the plan which I have proposed is both expedient and easy of execution. If such it be deemed, my earnest wish is, that it may attract the attention of those in authority, and find a place among those improvements in the system of governing our army, which the claims of the soldier, and the voice of the country, so loudly demand.

## CHAPTER IX.


Numerous indeed are the evils of which the private soldier may justly complain, but that one which exceeds all the rest in magnitude is the invasion to which his domestic felicity is liable.

It is a notoriously common thing for officers, particularly when they are on distant stations, to practise all their arts to obtain possession of the soldier's wives. I am sorry to say, that, in the generality of instances, the vanity of conquest prevails, and the seducer triumphs.

It is scarcely possible that there can be an instance on record, of a private having seduced the wife of his officer. But if such a thing had ever happened, the man would have been considered a vile monster, and his punishment, probably, would have been of such severity as to reach even to the brink of the grave. Instead of such conduct on the part of the officer towards his inferior meeting with any reprehension, it is deemed a mere matter of authorized

gallantry, and very likely becomes a prime joke at the mess-table, where the base violator of the engagements of matrimony, in his puerile vanity, plumes himself upon the dastard act, and fancies it a laurel upon his brow. Toward officers of this sort, the commanding officer generally assumes blindness. Perhaps he joins in the quiz and small satire to which the subject gives rise, for it not unfrequently happens, that he has his own little peccadilloes of the like nature.

Nor is it, as the reader would naturally imagine, in the way of private or concealed intrigue, that these amours are principally carried on. It more generally happens, that the soldier is deprived of his wife, and that the officer keeps her as his acknowledged concubine. What must be the feelings of the man, who thus finds himself wounded in the tenderest point, without having any sufficiently obvious means of redress. He cannot, he dare not, resent the injury. His blood may boil with the desire of vengeance, on the destroyer of his peace, yet he knows not how to procure it. He must meet him on parade, he must attend to his slightest looks and commands, he must obey him. He must rush with him, if



need be, into the battle's heat. But let me ask one question, would he protect him? Would he not be more likely, if he saw opportunity, to speed the bullet of death to his heart? But it is not on the subject of vengeance, or even of redress, that I would speak; for, in reality, there is no redress for wounded feelings of this sort. I would lead to prevention.

The uninitiated reader may start to hear that such things exist, and will be apt to exclaim, "Can this be, and is there no law for the common soldier, thus despoiled of his happiness, perhaps heart-broken and distracted?" Oh, yes! There is a very powerful law. The cat-o'-nine tails. This is the law, and it is no difficult matter, as I have before shewn, for an officer, if he be so minded, to bring it into frequent use.

I am not aware that there is any specific military law, whereby an officer could be punished for this unmanly bereavement, and flagitious usurpation of a poor man's right, further than the general law for the punishment of ungentlemanly conduct. The evil, however, in this case, is, that these crimes are rather considered as *gentlemanly* than otherwise.

But if there be not a military, surely there is a moral law which should stop such proceedings. Where are we to look for honourable feeling—where for loftiness of mind, in our army? Will not the man who is forced either by reward or coercion to see his wife living in a state of open prostitution, feel himself a mean spirited pitiful scoundrel? Is such a man, in the opinion of society at large, worthy of the name of soldier? Yet, who is it that makes him thus? The very set of individuals who ought to watch most zealously over that fame, with which they are identified, and to cherish in the bosom of the private soldier, every spark of high and noble feeling.

And these intrigues are dignified with the title of gallantries, forsooth. Thus giving a surreptitious merit to deeds which ought to be fixed on the "pedestal of scorn," and to stamp a man's name with infamy.

A soldier cannot, from the nature of his profession, know much of domestic happiness. Is it not cruel then—is it not shameful, that the very person who ought to protect him in its enjoyment, should be the very one to rob him of

it? I am no fanatic or idle babler. All that I say I can prove.

In a regiment in which I served as an officer, there was a captain who was not less distinguished for the gravity and gracefulness of his manners, than for his rigid discipline, and general correctness in all business affairs. He seduced the wife of a soldier of his own company; and lived with her openly, and had several children by her. After a few years he became tired of her, and sent her home to her lawful husband. This was notorious to the whole regiment. Meanwhile the gallant Captain had cast his voluptuous eye upon another and more lovely victim. This latter was the wife of a serjeant, whose virtue soon fell before his smooth flattering tongue, and she soon filled the place of his former concubine. The parties are all in existence, or I could mention their names. I could multiply instances of a similar nature, to such an extent as would not only astonish the reader, but tire his patience. On what grounds it has been established, that an officer can with impunity take the wife of a common soldier to be his mistress, I am at a loss to conceive. Does his superior rank authorise

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the commission of a dastardly and disgraceful act? assuredly not. Regulations in all other respects so rigid as those of the army, ought not to be permitted to connive or wink at such proceedings as those. The officer, though he has robbed a man of the wife whom he loved with tenderness, has nothing to do but to hinder the man as much as possible from complaining. This he may do either by the terror of that dreaded weapon the cat, or by soothing speeches, presents of money, and promises of promotion. If a man do not choose to be bribed by the latter, he must expect the former. Here is a notable method of training our men to high and heroic deeds. A soldier is *forced* to be mean, and base, and despicable! Self interest will make many men so, but the soldier has no choice.

It is very certain, in a community so organized in the dependance of its parts upon each other, that, if the hymeneal obligations of the men be not held sacred from principle, they ought to be made so by law. It would appear a delicate and a difficult matter to meddle with. But the griefs, the heart breakings, and the despair, resulting from wounds of this nature, are so

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deadly, that such exemplary punishment should be inflicted, or extensive compensation exacted, as would tend to make officers pause and think, ere they rush wantonly into an affair which, however light and trivial it may appear to them, is so injurious in its operation on the minds and morals of the men.



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**CHAPTER XII.****A POPULAR VIEW OF THE RELATIVE  
RANKS OF OFFICERS.**

In the preceding pages, I have taken an impartial view of the situation of the private soldier, under the present system of military discipline; a system that debases the man in his own esteem, and therefore weakens the army; that demoralizes the man, and thereby shortens his term of effective service; which prevents the enlistment of the high-minded and the sensitive, and leaves the recruiting of our regiments to the disappointed, the stupid, and the depraved; which lowers the moral and intellectual standard of our regiments, and assimilates them to the composition of David's force at the cave of Adullam, "every one that was in distress, every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented;" a system, the working of which has clearly proved the necessity of a more active



controlling power over our officers, and the abridgment of individual discretionary power.

Does the reader imagine the picture overdrawn? I can assure him it is not; I have set down naught in malice. My object is to exalt the profession I love, by forcing its officers into decorum; by having the ordinary weaknesses of humanity regulated and restrained; by raising its privates above the ordinary peasant and mechanic, as much in character as is the object of their services. I would have the banner of my country supported by the hearts as well as hands of all who march under it; and when unfurled, it should wave only over wounds received in battle, and never over the lacerations of "the cat;" and I do look forward with the hope of seeing the time when that, which is now almost a term of reproach, "a common soldier," shall be equivalent to an uncommon man.

I shall now give a popular sketch of the relative ranks of the officers of a regiment:—

#### THE COLONEL

of a regiment. If he be a man who loves his profession and his men, if he be a man stricken

in years, of humanity, generosity, and one who has seen something more of the service than is exhibited on a field day in Hyde Park, he is looked up to as the patriarch of the regiment, and is revered, admired, and loved. Officers, too, ought to be aware that from necessity a private soldier is an observer; hence, if his colonel's grey hairs have been steeped in the blood of his enemies, if his forehead has been tanned by a foreign sun, his body mutilated in the *mêlée* of battle, if he has led his regiment bravely into the field of glory, or out of it with honour, none but a soldier can estimate the enthusiasm inspired by his presence. Nothing indeed can give a more favourable impression of the profession, than the meeting of a disabled veteran with the skeleton of his regiment, on their return from service, for which age or wounds had incapacitated him. The feelings of the men and such an officer are reciprocal, the soldiers of his regiment are his family; their fame, his honour; their deeds, his glory; and when they suffer, he participates in their agony, as the following incident will prove.

When the troops returned in January, 1809,

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from that glorious but destructive campaign in Spain, I happened to be at Portsmouth, the place of their debarkation. In the same house was an aged veteran colonel, whose venerable appearance and furrowed cheeks, bespoke long and arduous service. I dined at the same table; the old gentleman sat down to dinner, but could neither eat nor drink; at last he rose, and with his head bent upon his bosom, paced the room with martial step and cadence: still restless in mind, the corporeal action appeared to inflame the mental agitation, he sighed deeply and sat down. I had beheld the internal conflict with much interest, which, perhaps, my countenance, or the military attitude, shoulders back, and head erect, which I had unconsciously assumed, had betrayed; for, turning towards me, he said, "Young man, have you ever been a soldier?" I replied in the affirmative. when extending his hand, mine was instantly received in his iron grasp, and his deep black searching eyes, which seemed to penetrate my inmost thought, vividly bespoke that "soldier" was the pass word to his heart. "Have you seen any service?" said he. "I have," was my reply. "Where!" "In the

East Indies." "Indeed! have you ever been wounded?" "Yes, I have received four ball wounds." "Four ball wounds, (he repeated) and so young in the service! I informed him, that I had already served 12 years. He drew his chair closer to mine, enquired my name, regiment, and many other particulars, which evinced his deep interest in the prosperity of his profession. He still retained my hand, and as I detailed "each accident by flood or field," his hand unconsciously bespoke his feelings, and his lips articulated the sounds of "brave boy!" "heroic boy!" an occasional sob, a convulsion of the lip, and a traitor tear, shewed these were not exclamations for the ear, but emanations from the heart. He then enquired my present rank; and I own my vanity so far prevailed as to make me hesitate to avow myself a private soldier, but I did do so. "A private (he exclaimed with surprise, and almost indignation) you should have been a general officer!" This compliment did not, however, prevent my rising to depart; but he pressed me down upon my chair, he perceived that consciousness of inferior rank had induced me to withdraw, and kindly said, you

must not yet leave me. I then hinted at our different situations. "Pooh! pooh! it is the man that honours or disgraces the station, not the station the man. I love the brave; I love the profession; and I do not feel my rank or station impaired by this meeting." A most interesting conversation ensued, during which I learned, he was the colonel of the — one of the regiments about to disembark, on their return from Spain. He spoke of the services of his corps with enthusiasm, and the eloquence of his language was heightened by the flashes of his eye, and the suffusion of his countenance, as he related how some had bravely lived, and others gloriously fell, while under his immediate command. He turned to the present state of his much loved corps; and the martial fire of the veteran was overpowered by the feelings of the man, as he recounted their sufferings in that fatal retreat, in which his corps was all but destroyed by conflict, drunkenness, and starvation. He dwelt on the recklessness which extreme suffering is too apt to impart to the men, and he pitied and endeavoured to palliate faults which he could not but condemn. He had not

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yet seen the skeleton of his once fine regiment, but he wept at the many hopes which had been blighted in its dismemberment. It was a scene worth witnessing, one which could not be contemplated by the most hardened without imparting some share of emotion; it was a practical contradiction to the popular idea, that the military service hardens the feelings, and renders the heart callous to suffering.

At the request of the colonel, I breakfasted with him next morning, after which I was obliged to depart; indeed, my own feelings had been so excited on the previous day, that I did not wish to encounter such a scene as the meeting of the colonel and the remainder of his officers and men, among whom, I understood, was his son in law. He gave me his hand at parting, and left therein a letter, which, on arriving at the house I opened, and found enclosed a ten pound note, with the simple signature of "From a Soldier's Friend."

THE LIEUTENANT COLONEL,

when he unites the feelings of a *man* with the characteristics of a good officer, is popularly re-

garded as the father of the corps. He almost invariably accompanies it in active service; he shares its dangers, its privations, and its glory, and if such a man as the colonel, of whom I have spoken, he becomes even more intimately interested in its welfare, than many in the higher rank can be, from the difference of their circumstances. Being generally, if not always with the corps, his weaknesses and virtues are well known, and when the former lean towards the soldiers, perhaps they still more endear him to their feelings. Will it however be considered irrelative, if I for one moment direct the reader's attention to a colonel of a different disposition? Suppose a colonel commanding a regiment is passionate, tyrannical, and vindictive; that he has none of the generous emotions of humanity; that he is a disciplinarian only in little things, and endeavours to compensate for his military ignorance by the most scrupulous attention to obvious minutiae; that he is mean of soul, of mind contracted. When I consider that such a man may be, has been, placed in command of a regiment; when I reflect on the frightful power placed in his hands, and the shocking sufferings



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connected with its abuse, I am involuntarily drawn into another appeal against that odious instrument of torture, degradation, and demoralisation, "the cat;" and I am obliged to refer my readers to an essay on this subject (printed separately sometime since) which I have inserted as an Appendix. (a)

Suppose then, such a colonel as the above; his power, particularly on foreign service, is uncontrolled, nor are his actions liable to be reviewed; he comes on parade, his only feeling a consciousness of his importance; his only principle of action, the operation of his temper; his little mind, incapable of grasping the grand military duties, is immediately directed to what I may call arbitrary faults; that is, faults which may or may not exist, according to the disposition of a commander, such as unsteadiness in the ranks, want of sufficient attention to cleanliness, &c. &c. such crimes, if they did exist, a great and good officer might mark by slight extra drills, are by him magnified into all but treason; which demand an example, and which,

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(a) See Appendix.

under his influence, may be visited on the unfortunate victim, with perhaps, 200 lashes, through the convenient instrumentality of a drum head court martial. I have known such instances, and I could mention the name of a commanding officer, who always vented the spleen which had been inspired by a domestic harradan on the backs of his unfortunate command. Is it not most atrocious then, "that such things be!" The master of an ordinary servant, let his rank be ever so exalted, if he acts improperly, if by verbal abuse, personal violence, or any other act of tyranny, he shall injure that servant, is open to the chastisement of the law, and is made to pay either in his person, or by his purse, for his encroachment on the equality of man; and death has been accorded to a nobleman, for shooting his servant in a paroxysm of passion. But in the case of a soldier, under the present irresponsible code of military law, of the man who voluntarily exposes his person to privation, his life to danger, for his king and country, is widely different. He may be tortured to death; on him agonies may be inflicted, to which the sufferings of the Martyrs were mercy;

the pangs of wounded honour may be added to the corporeal writhings of the dying wretch, and still the author of these horrors may escape unpunished ; these atrocities may be buried in oblivion ! Civilians ! then, let me entreat you not to remain idle ; let me implore you, to pour in petitions to the Legislature, not only to abolish flogging in the army and navy, but for the abridgment of discretionary power which there exists.

With respect to the necessity for this irresponsible power, I am convinced that none exists ; and it may be a question worthy of future consideration, whether the private soldier ought not to have a civil remedy for injuries inflicted in his military service ; in my opinion, this might be so qualified, as to be made beneficially operative. Soldiers, when kindly treated, are generally manageable, and the regiments in which there is most severity are generally most inefficient ; certain it is also, that few flogging commanders have ever attained extraordinary celebrity for either conduct or courage. See soldiers in the field with a generous able commander ; every man would risk a life to save

his, if accident or ardour place him in extraordinary danger. Regardless of personal consequences, each man vies with the other to relieve him, and proud is the man indeed whose breast may have received a wound intended for such a superior. On the contrary, an arbitrary despotic officer makes inefficient spiritless soldiers; they hate him, would gladly run from him, and glory in his fall; nay, more than one man of this character has met his death from the arms of his command: this is an incontrovertible fact, which though only whispered in the army is not the less authentic. I cannot therefore help urging on all officers commanding, that the exercise of the milder virtues, is the most efficient means of making good soldiers; that to degrade men is to destroy them. I do not wish for one moment, that a firmness of manner and strictness of discipline should be abandoned, but that they should be accompanied by a wholesome humanity.

THE MAJOR.

How shall I describe this nondescript? to what portion of that great family is he to be

compared? The rank however does not affect the character of the man, and though it be not either ornamental or useful, many valuable officers have, while passing its useless ordeal, become the bye-word of the army; the stock on which the soldiers graft such coarse jokes as the following: He waggles like a major, is as drunk as a major, lies like a major. Where did you hear that piece of scandal? It came from the major. Where did you get that song? It was first sung at the mess by the major. What an infernal long yarn? Oh! its one of the major's. You gossip like a major. Such is the ordinary puns of the barrack on the private pretensions of the major. His military skill, (shall I call it non-duty?) is equally open to its puns. Who is always behind in the charge, and in front in the retreat? Why, the major. Who tumbled off his horse in the charge? The major. Who got the rear rank in front without knowing it? The major. Who was in the wrong flank, and did not know how to get to the right? The major. Who cut his horse's tail off, instead of the head of the enemy? Who placed the cartridge in his pistol, with the ball downwards? Who shot his

horse's ear off? Who shot the dead man, and mistook him for a royal eagle? Why, the major is the answer to all these, and a thousand other stupidities, which evinces that the rank is held as much in contempt by the private soldier for its uselessness in operation, as it is disliked by all civilians for its expensive worthlessness.

#### THE CAPTAIN

Is really a useful officer if he understands his duty, or understanding, will condescend to perform its manifold requirements. The efficiency of the officer is therefore entirely dependent on the character of the man. Captain, is however, a high sounding word; and before it was somewhat levelled to ordinary apprehensions, by being introduced in the police office, it had somewhat of an awful character. It still however (in the army) dubs a man a gentleman, and implies that he has power. Unfortunately, this increase of rank and importance, too often is accompanied with a disproportionate advance of puppyism and impertinence, and his very walk appears to say

May I be d—d  
If ere I condescend,  
To speak with sub,  
Or dub him friend.

When this exaltation thus acts, the man is a new being; those whom he was in the habit of hailing with Bill, Jack, or Tom, are now politely addressed, as Ensign B. Lieutenant C. or Mr. D. He assumes a dignity of demeanour quite irreconcilable with his former familiarities; and happy indeed is it for his former *pals*, if the *fortiter in re* is always accompanied by the *suaviter in modo*. A Captain of this class soon loses his voice; his words are lisped through the corner of his mouth, in the most exquisite *piano*, so that you hardly know if the sounds proceed from a sick hoyden, a *petite maitre*, or a fashionable belle communicating a secret; he is also as stiff as a poker, and square as a gate post; his chest is protruded; his watch chain is as large as a chain cable, and his seals as big as a stirrup iron; and with these he beats the row de dow dow, whenever he condescends to speak with a sub on matters of duty. I knew one of this class, who in every motion, bespoke the dancing master

rather than the soldier; and the only words I ever heard uttered with the stentorian lungs of a sub, for which, by the bye, he had once been remarkable, were Damn my foes; curse my spurs; confounded b-o-r-e: worthy results truly of the astounding effort. Notwithstanding we do meet with such animals as the above; notwithstanding we must meet with much listlessness; absence of moral as well as physical energy in this official capacity, while the army is conducted on the present system; yet is the station one of the most honourable and active in the army. I would this were the only ill result of the influence of money and interest in this most honourable profession. Officers and soldiers ought to be advanced in proportion to their merit. Is this the case? it is not. How is this? Surely the men are promoted according to merit? I avow they are not. I would fain hope, this is more the case now as far as regards the private soldier; but I fearlessly assert that, in my service and experience, the influence alluded to in the chapter on "Seduction, &c." too often prevails. The following is a fact to which I have evidence, and is only one among



many that I could support. I was once an expectant of a certain situation in the army which I will not now name, and I had been informed by good authority, that it was not to be filled by me. I knew, I was not only the most proper person, that I had always taken a pride in the strict performance of my duty ; but that by succession, I had every right to expect this rise. I was therefore completely disgusted with a service in which promotion was so unfairly distributed. I was standing at the corner of my barrack with a face as long as a sub on half pay ; disconsolate as a flogged soldier. The canker worm was at my heart, and the devil endeavouring to sow the seeds of disloyalty in my bosom, when I received a violent slap on my back, so sudden that it made me jump like an antelope. Turning quickly round, ——— ———, met my sight, a beautiful creature, the wife of a serjeant in the regiment ; of one who had taught her to despise him, by sacrificing her on the altar of professional ambition, or perhaps from a still inferior motive ; that however was nothing to me then. “ Why Jack, (she exclaimed) you look as melancholy as if you were half hanged ; what ails you ? ”

“ I suppose you have heard (said I) that the \_\_\_\_\_ is to be given to another.”  
“ Who told you so?” “ The adjutant,” I said with a sigh that would have done honour to the breast of an elephant. She paused, hesitated a minute, and then said, “ I’ll bet you a gold mohur you get it.” I, of course, readily accepted the wager, and obtained the situation, through that most effective of all influences on the hearts and actions of men, that of woman! She did not however forget the gold mohur, which of course I gladly paid. Spite of all this, I must once more assert, the captain is a valuable officer, perhaps the most efficient and responsible in the regiment.

### SUBALTERNS

Too often obtain the character of being little better than good natured puppies, that is in time of peace; among these however are to be met many high minded men, who do honour to the profession, and whose every pulse beats with the purest love to their king and their country; many embued with the most active emotions of patriotism, who would be at all times willing to

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sacrifice their lives at the call of honour. Nevertheless, it must be confessed, that the principal occupation of many, is to quiz and ogle the soldier's wives; dance at a provincial ball; take a lounge in a library; in short, to obtain the glorious reputation of being a very pretty fellow. Even this is sometimes mischievous, and sometimes meets with a suitable reward, as the following instance will illustrate. As I was one day going to barracks at Hounslow, I perceived a stripling in uniform on a prancing horse; my attention was drawn by the vociferation of "Get out of the way, Johnny Lump, or I'll ride over you." This was addressed to an athletic country fellow driving a van; the only notice the bumpkin took of the threat was a loud Ha! ha! ha! and then with the lungs of a Stentor, and grinning a good humoured smile, "You had better try it on, Maister." The enraged boy ran his horse right at him, but Johnny was too much awake for the youngster; he slipt quickly aside, and saluted the youth as he passed with the lash of an enormous whip, which must have strongly reminded him that he had but lately left his school; another Ha! ha! ha! accompanied this

effort of the countryman, who immediately bel-  
lowed out, " You had better charge back again  
as General Whitelock did ! ha ! ha ! ha ! " The  
young subaltern however had by this time recol-  
lected, that the better part of valour was discre-  
tion, and rode off at a good round gallop. I hope  
a wiser man. As I came up to the bumpkin,  
" I say, maister (said he) that ere chap wont do  
for a soger, if he can't do better than that, ha !  
ha ! ha ! He didn't seem to like this here hit of  
a lash ; he's not the first puppy I've whipp'd ;  
yet, dang them, I loikea sogera too, as well as  
any body doos."

Here I turned towards the barracks, admiring  
the spirit with which the bumpkin repress the  
insolence of one who had so foolishly disgraced  
his uniform ; one who, though an officer of the  
king, had forgotten that urbanity of manners  
and benevolence of action, must be the distin-  
guishing marks of a gentleman.

## APPENDIX.

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### FLOGGING AND ITS SUBSTITUTE.

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*To Sir Francis Burdett, Bart.*

SIR FRANCIS,

Had I not, as I presume to think I have, a most perfect knowledge of the evil tendency of flogging soldiers, I should not venture to offer my remarks on a system, the abolition of which has been advocated in Parliament, with all the power which reason and humanity can impart to eloquence. But my sentiments against this mode of punishment, arise from a long-continued observation of its pernicious and dangerous effects; and my utter aversion to it, from a cordial sympathy with the oppressed, and an ardent admiration of the brave.

Who, that has seen the infliction, can contemplate without horror, the destructive instrument of degradation, the Cat-o'-nine-tails. Surely it must have been the studied invention of a cold, malignant heart, existing in the bosom of one who lives and feasts upon the woes and miseries of others—who delights in inflicting torture, and erects the triumph of his vengeance upon the fall and ruin of others. It must have

been his glory to oppress, his pride to goad, his delight to tantalize and make unhappy. Could any but a cruel and despotic mind have devised such an effectual means of degrading and debasing human nature? If its author had arisen from the dark abyss of despair, where there is every thing that awful retribution can devise to punish unrepented iniquity, he could not have contrived a more corresponding instrument. It never could have been the invention or offspring of a man who had one spark of humanity—one jot of love for his fellow creatures—one thought, but that on which to feed his vindictive spirit. Its influence is the very acmé of disgrace; and that the demoralizing system should be permitted still to dishonour the sons of Britain, yea, even those who have bled and conquered, is—in these times of intellectual pursuit, these boasted times of humanity, in this free, liberal, and generous country—a foul blot upon its code of military enactments.

During the first eight years of my military career, it was my painful duty to inflict, some three times a week, the punishment which I so heartily deprecate. At that early period I felt a profound disgust at being made the unwilling instrument of the torture which is thought essential to the support and promotion of discipline; even then, from my necessarily superficial and imperfect notice of the general effect of corporal punishment, I entertained doubts as to its efficiency in producing the desired end: subsequent occurrences and considerations have confirmed

those doubts into a decided and permanent opinion.

It is, as I think, Sir Francis, quite demonstrable, notwithstanding all that has been advanced by persons of a different opinion, that those who are illiterate and ignorant are very sensitive to oppression and alive to wrong: I hesitate not to say, more susceptible than those who are better informed. The capacities of the former, will not permit them to view the punishment under which they suffer, in connexion with the cause by which it is produced; they are only sensible of the cruelty of the effect; and thus, irritated by the infliction of a supposed wrong, reason is subdued by the impulse of the moment, and they consider themselves deeply injured when receiving the punishment of offence. On the other hand, those who are possessed of more knowledge and judgment, would compare the turpitude of the offence with the severity of the punishment, and thence reflect whether they had received the award of justice, or endured the insult of tyranny. Each of such persons would act according to his respective conclusions; and their feelings on such an occasion would be consonant with, or considerably modified by, their measure of candour and reason. Whether this position be probably valid, or certainly fallacious, I shall leave you, Sir, to infer; but, if admitted to be tenable, it must be allowed, also, that no good results can be expected from a punishment which is, in general, outrageously disproportioned to the offence, and which, independently of its

cruelty, has a certain tendency to degrade the feelings, and to harden the heart.

It is some consolation to me, to be able to say, that my present views are not induced by the remembrance of personal castigation; but from the practical observation of its effect on others, I can most solemnly affirm that, in my opinion, flogging is, and always will be, the best, the quickest, and most certain method that can be devised, to eradicate from the bosom of a British soldier, his most loyal and laudable feelings. During the whole of my career, which included a period of upwards of thirty years, and the length and nature of which afforded me opportunities for extensive inquiry, and accurate information, I never knew but one solitary instance, in which a man recovered self-respect and general reputation, after having been tortured and degraded by the punishment which is the subject of this letter. This isolated case was as follows:—

When I was regimental serjeant-major, in the Light Dragoons, the regiment was one evening paraded for the purpose of seeing punishment inflicted. The delinquent was a private soldier, who had on previous occasions received, altogether, some thousands of lashes. Since his first flogging, his name had been constantly in the guard reports, and he had scarcely ever done a day's duty. His offence, on this occasion, was being drunk on guard, and his sentence was three hundred lashes. The court-martial was read, and even before it was finished, he began



to undress with apparent indifference, and sullen apathy. He knew the heinousness of his crime, and he was well aware of its certain consequences. When he was tied up, his naked back presented so appalling and frightful a spectacle, that his kind-hearted commanding officer, on viewing it, turned his head instinctively from the sight, and stood absorbed in thought, with his eyes in another direction, as though reluctant to look on it again. Thus stood the commanding officer until the adjutant informed him that all was ready. These words roused the colonel from his motionless position, and he started when the adjutant addressed him. I can well imagine the struggle between duty and mercy by which his benevolent heart was assailed : but the latter was triumphant : and, thus kindly predisposed, he walked slowly up to the prisoner, and viewed more closely his lacerated back, on which were visible, large lumps of thick and callous flesh, and weals which were distressing to behold. The colonel viewed his back for some seconds, unknown to the delinquent, and when he at length turned round (more from surprise that the flogging did not commence, than from any other motive) his commanding officer addressed him in the following words :—" C——, you are now tied up to receive the just reward of your total disregard and defiance of all order and discipline. Your back presents an awful spectacle to your surrounding comrades, and for my own part I would willingly withdraw it from their sight ; but I fear your heart is as hard as your back,

and that I have no alternative but to see that justice administered which the service requires. What possible benefit can you expect to derive from this continual disobedience of orders, and disregard of the regulations of the service?" Thus addressed, in a mingled tone of benignity and firmness, the poor fellow seemed touched, and he wept bitterly. For a time he could say nothing, but at last he exclaimed, "I wish to God I was dead and out of your way! I am an unfortunate fellow; and I hope this flogging may be my last, and put me beyond the reach of that cursed and vile liquor, which has been my ruin." The colonel and the whole regiment were now much affected; and many of the soldiers turned away their heads to hide their emotion. Seeing this, the colonel called the attention of the offender to the commiseration of his comrades. The unhappy man looked round as he was directed, and seemed much distressed. The colonel then said, "I cannot bear to see your brother soldiers so much affected for you, without removing the cause. Your sentence, therefore, for their sakes, I will remit; and, instead of the chastisement which has been awarded you, and which you so well deserve, if you will pledge yourself to me, in the presence of your commiserating comrades, that you will behave well in future, I will not only pardon you, but promise, when your conduct shall merit it, to promote you to the rank of corporal." The astonished culprit called upon his comrades to bear witness to his words, while, in a most

solemn manner, he protested his firm resolution to amend. A short time after, this man was promoted, and proved one of the best non-commissioned officers in the service. The unlooked-for mercy which had been extended towards him, and the totally unexpected turn which the affair had taken, raised the feelings of his heart far above the level to which disgrace had plunged them, and every exertion was made by him to merit the kind consideration with which he had been distinguished. This man would often speak to me, on this happy event in his life, with feelings of ineffable pleasure.

Here, then, is a signal instance of the good effects of well-timed lenity. The commanding officer, in this case, unable to repress the impulses of humanity, would not permit the sentence to be executed, but pardoned the man; adding to the forgiveness of his present offence, a promise that promotion should be the certain reward of his future good conduct. This treatment, as we have seen, had the desired effect. The man's contrition and good feelings were aroused from the torpor into which they had been plunged by frequent and unrelenting severity; there was an appeal made to his gratitude and rationality; he felt that he was regarded as a being that possessed some of the distinguishing powers and sympathies of human nature; and his restoration to order and respectability was suitably evinced by his subsequent good behaviour and elevation. And what, let me ask the advocates of coercion, was the cause of this?—

The poor fellow had received coercion in the right place, the heart. His back might have been mangled by the detestable instrument of barbarous punishment, till the power of endurance was destroyed; but no such good effects as were the consequences of the contrary treatment would have been elicited. Sentence might have followed upon sentence; and the unhappy sufferer would have sunk at last into the welcome tomb, contemned, perhaps, by the ignorant and unthinking, overpowered by the acute goadings of self-reproach, and breathing forth curses, against those whom he supposed to be his persecutors. But towards the individual to whom I allude, the officer displayed a judicious kindness, which penetrated the hitherto impregnable fortress of the heart, and made him willingly surrender at the discretion of his merciful conqueror. Would that many such instances could be discovered, even by the most laborious research?

Having adduced a remarkable instance of the beneficial effects of mercy, I proceed to cite a solitary case, out of at least a thousand, which came under my own notice, of the baneful effects of severity, and the inefficiency of corporal punishment in conducing to the required discipline.

In the experimental corps in which I commenced my military career, I recollect two boys being sentenced to be flogged for desertion. They were brothers, and the elder was not more than thirteen years of age. They had deserted together, and probably intended to have gone

home again, not much relishing their new mode of life. The elder boy was tied up first, and, having received about six dozen lashes, he was ordered down, and it became the turn of his younger brother to occupy his place. Afflicted by the idea of what his poor little brother was about to suffer, the senior boy begged, in the most earnest manner, that he might be permitted to take his brother's punishment, protesting, most solemnly, that he was the sole cause of his desertion. When this was refused, and the younger one was ordered to strip, the shrieks of the two rent the air. They flew into each other's arms, clung together, and, when they were torn asunder, the tear of pity started to the eyes of all around. The little fellow received every lash to which he had been sentenced; and in little more than a year after, there were not two greater reprobates or vagabonds in the whole corps. The elder boy soon died. Of the fate of the younger I cannot speak with certainty; but I think he was found drowned in Table Bay, at the Cape of Good Hope.

The instances which I have now laid before you, Sir, in proof of the evil effects of flogging soldiers, will, perhaps, find their way to the heart sooner than all the arguments that can be urged against this barbarous mode of punishment. That the castigation is cruel and agonizing, those who have ever witnessed its infliction cannot doubt; yet it is not, as I think, the bodily anguish, though intense and excruciating, to which the bad results which ever follow the

enforcement of this savage system of discipline are to be assigned. In the lacerated back, the wound is deep; but in the disgraced bosom, still deeper. The rent and bruised flesh will heal and the corporeal pain will subside; but who can administer to the wounded spirit? what can repair the broken heart? I hesitate not to say, that I consider it monstrous to suppose that any man possessed of the ordinary sensibilities of nature, or whose character is in the slightest degree tinctured with a becoming pride and self-respect, can be reformed by a system of coercion united with degradation; and I will even go so far as to assert my conviction, that many men, of the most profligate and hardened disposition, from whose minds all the torture which military law can inflict would not turn the current of vice, might, by an opposite treatment, be weaned from their ways of depravity, and diverted into the paths of duty by a single act of well-timed leniency. The attempt, however, as far as I can speak, has been so seldom made, that it would be difficult to find proofs to evidence the truth of such a position, although I have instanced one case.

The grand objects which are sought when an offender is punished, I take to be two: first, to effect a reform in the conduct of the culprit himself; and, secondly, to deter others from the commission of the same crime. That the latter object is not in some degree attained by the cruelty of the flogging system, it were absurd to deny. The degrading spectacle of a poor fellow

being tied up for some trivial offence, to have his naked back scarified with an instrument of torture, must be allowed to be a sight so revolting as to affright others. But the system is not to be vindicated on these grounds ; or the practice of hanging a man for laughing at an improper time, might be justified on the same principle. With respect to the other view with which punishment is inflicted, the amendment of the delinquent, the system of flogging is not only wholly inefficacious for this desirable purpose, but has, in at least ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, a tendency directly the reverse.

Those who still argue against the abolition of corporeal punishment, urge, as the fundamental ground-work of their reasoning, that flogging is better than resorting to the more rigorous penalties of the law, by shooting soldiers, which many of the crimes incident to the profession would render necessary, if flogging were not allowed. I am willing to grant, without dispute, that, where an individual has justly incurred the penalty of death, the commutation of that dreadful sentence to corporal punishment may, in such a case, be deemed a mercy. But, admitting this, what earthly benefit does the service derive from such an alternative ? The individual punished by flogging is dead to a sense of his duty after such debasement, and will ever be found a burden upon his country, and a bitter pest upon his corps. The civil law provides for such offenders by sending them for life from their native country ; but the flogged

soldier is permitted, disgraced as he is, to remain in his regiment, to commit more crime, with the certainty that he has imbibed an utter hatred of his profession.

An obdurate and disobedient soldier, who sets all order and military discipline at defiance, ought to be driven from the army, and obliged to wear upon his person some mark of his discardment. This, hanging over the heads of soldiers (I mean, of course, as the last extremity) would effect infinitely more than all the chastisement that can be inflicted upon their bodies. It would also be the means of preventing men of bad character from again creeping into either the army or the navy. I am fully persuaded, from my long experience, that flogging will never urge men to reformation; for I have ever observed that it causes increased disobedience and discontent, and at last drives them to acts of sad desperation. Some of the vehement advocates for the cat also argue (but I think fallaciously) that the minds of common soldiers are, from their early habits of life, barren and uncultivated, and hence more callous, and not so susceptible of the tenderer and nicer feelings as those of the more enlightened. This is not quite so obvious to me, who have lived with them both boy and man. I would ask those who are enemies to the abolition of corporal punishment, a few simple questions: *Have they served in the ranks, and mixed and lived in social friendship with the private soldiers of our country? Have they ever sat at the bedside of a flogged man, and*



*witnessed the agony of his heart and the distraction of his mind? Have they ever heard the un-intimidated and unbiassed opinions of the soldiers in their barrack-rooms respecting the ignominious lash?* If not, they are but half-competent judges on this great question. If this great promoter of discipline be so requisite to practice, and so efficient in checking the most turbulent soldiers, how is it that some men who have been once flogged, fall under the lash almost every week afterwards? Why can French soldiers be governed without resorting to similar punishments? The advocates of the flogging system may perhaps say, "Because they have a higher sense of honour, nicer feelings, more pride," &c. Granted, that they are superior in all these respects, and the question follows, *Why should they be?* The answer is palpable; this degrading system is not practised among them: IT IS THIS VERY SYSTEM THAT IS THE STUMBLING-BLOCK IN OUR ARMY. The French liberal system of discipline encourages the young aspirant, and infuses into the minds of the soldiers that they are a people far above the common peasantry. Abrogate the cruel and impolitic law which subjects our brave fellows to the ignominy of the lash, and which, in numberless instances, crushes the best feelings of the man ere they are allowed to bud, and then it will be seen that the notion that British soldiers are not as high-minded and honourable as those of France or any other country is as futile as that the protectors of Albion cannot be governed without the aid of

such means as place them upon a level with the veriest miscreants in a gaol!

Another ground on which flogging must be reprobated is, that its infliction depends greatly on the disposition or caprice of the commanding officer. The man, it is true, is brought to a court-martial; but this, also, is at the discretion of the commanding-officer; and that tribunal will frequently sentence the offender to a certain number of lashes, to be inflicted "in such manner as the commanding-officer shall think fit."

Let the returns of each regiment be called for, for any given year, and it will be found that, IN SOME CORPS NOT A MAN HAS BEEN FLOGGED, AND IN OTHERS FIFTY, AND PERHAPS MORE. How is this to be accounted for? The thing is obvious and clear: it cannot rest so much with the men, for they will be found pretty much alike in all corps: IT WILL DEPEND ENTIRELY ON THE DISPOSITIONS OF THE COMMANDERS. If an officer be of a tyrannical disposition, or an ungovernable temper, the cat will be found in frequent use in the regiment under his command. If the commander be a man of humanity, and possess a heart of kindness, he will admonish, advise, encourage, and endeavour to infuse into the minds of youth a kind of parental love and affection. In the regiment where mercy reigns, discipline, order, harmony, and peace of mind will be found; but, *in the regiment where rigid flogging is practised, discontent, disorder, and a*

*great deal of bad feeling towards the officers, are sure to prevail.*

We see despotic masters who would, in their rage, cut their servants to pieces; but there is a law that restrains their tyrannic lash, and they know the penalty attached to such a breach of the laws. It should be recollected that the despotic commanding-officer has no penalty of this kind to keep his irritability under subjection.

I am now, Sir, about to notice another abuse to which the flogging system has given birth, and which, in my opinion, deserves severe reprobation. It is, I believe, but of late years that the practice to which I allude has crept into the service; but I am informed that it has actually become, in some regiments, an established rule. It consists in giving a soldier, who has fallen under the displeasure of his commanding-officer, the choice, either to receive a certain number of lashes, say fifty, a hundred, or a hundred and fifty, as the case may be, or to abide the decision of a court-martial. Monstrous as this infringement of military law may appear, I hesitate not to state that I have myself been ordered (by the commanding-officer of a regiment in which I served) to give soldiers who had offended, the option of submitting to receive a stipulated number of lashes, or of standing the chance of the award of a court-martial. As far as my personal experience goes, I should be inclined to say that the number of lashes fixed by the commander would be generally accepted by the offender in preference to risking the sentence of

the court. Most men would be inclined to look upon the prescribed amount of lashes as a mitigation of punishment, and to receive them accordingly; but it is not, of course, because the men approve of such an expedient, that the custom is to be vindicated; nor is the commander justifiable, even if he resort to it from the best motives. The practice, as it appears to me, can only be attributed to three motives. I should most willingly say that it might be ascribed wholly to the first motive, viz. an anxiety felt by the commanding-officer to screen the culprit from some portion, at least, of the punishment attached to his offence; did I not recollect that the second may be, *to save the trouble of assembling a court-martial*; and the third, *to prevent duplicity*. But, whatever may be the motive, the practice itself is not wholly unwarrantable, but subversive of the sole principle upon which the necessity for punishment can be maintained, that it operates as an example to others. The comparative privacy with which punishment is inflicted, when received by the men in preference to going before a court-martial, defeats this object; the revolting sight is witnessed only by the troop or company to which the culprit belongs, instead of by the whole regiment. If a commanding-officer resort to such a measure from motives of humanity, which I am convinced is often the case, I think he will find me correct in stating that he is guilty of an unjustifiable assumption of authority. If his object be to save the trouble of as-

sembling a court-martial, it must be evident that he sacrifices justice to convenience ; and if, from a knowledge that these private castigations are not made matter of report, so as to be known to the higher authority, he seeks to screen from notice the amount of punishment actually inflicted in his regiment, the motive is a very unworthy one, and the effect of such secrecy is highly injurious to the service. Of all injustice, that is the greatest which goes under the name of law ; and of all sorts of tyranny, the forcing of the letter of the law against equity, is the most unsupportable.

Some commanding officers strike into a most erroneous and fallacious principle of discipline, by endeavouring to break the spirits of volatile youth by coercive means, and the moment they get hold of juvenile offenders, dragging them to the triangles for the most trifling offence. Some of these officers I have actually known to pardon an old and hardened offender, on the ground that they " could catch him every day ;" while, at the very same moment, they would insist on a sentence being rigidly carried into execution against a juvenile and thoughtless delinquent, for his first offence, who, simply because he seldom appeared before them, was punished on that very account.

While this is the character of some officers, others I have known whose practice was exactly the reverse. The Hon. Colonel Monson, late commandant in the 76th regiment, was one who hated the very name of flogging.

Whenever crime and justice to the service enforced obedience to this mode of discipline, which was his abhorrence, he scarcely ever attended parade. He dared not trust his feelings to witness such a scene; but, when he did attend, I have seen the tear of pity stealing down his cheek, and he would always turn his back towards the suffering object. I have often heard the same brave colonel deprecate flogging in the bitterest terms; saying it was an evil of the greatest magnitude, against which he would always put his *veto*.

When at Jersey, in the year 1808, it was my painful duty to witness the infliction of corporal punishment almost every week. This was not in my own regiment, for the colonel of our corps, Lieutenant Colonel John Covell, was one who never resorted to flogging, except as a last resource, and then with great reluctance, and with feelings of sorrow that he had no alternative. At the period of which I speak, we were at war with France, but, in one of the battalions of the 60th regiment, then at Jersey, we had many French soldiers. Many of these men deserted, and most of them were taken in the attempt. When we consider that they were natives of France, it is no great wonder, that when a war broke out, they should attempt to quit the English service, in preference to fighting against their own country; and, in my humble opinion, it would have been neither unwise nor impolitic to have discharged them all; for men who would be base enough to fight against their

own country, could scarcely be considered fit to be trusted by any other power. But, be this as it may, many of these men were taken, and sentenced to receive a thousand lashes each for their desertion. This punishment was rigidly inflicted, with the additional torture which must have resulted from the number of five being slowly counted between each lash ; so that, upon a fair calculation, each delinquent received one lash every twelve seconds, and, consequently, the space of three hours and twenty minutes was occupied in inflicting the total punishment as though a thousand lashes were not of themselves a sufficiently awful sentence, without so cruel and unnecessary a prolongation of misery ! Many of these poor creatures fainted several times from intensity of bodily suffering ; but, having been restored to their senses by medicinal applications, the moment they could move their heads the castigation recommenced in all its rigour ! Numbers of them were taken down and carried from the square in a state of utter insensibility. The spectacle, altogether, instead of operating as an example to others, created disgust and abhorrence in the breast of every soldier present who was worthy of the name of man.

The following is a picture of the revolting ceremony of flogging, for which, I apprehend, few persons will be prepared. From the very first day I entered the service as drum-boy, and for eight years after, I can venture to assert that, at the lowest calculation, it was my disgust-

ing duty to flog men at least three times a week. From this painful task there was no possibility of shrinking, without the certainty of a rattan over my own shoulders by the drum-major, or of my being sent to the black-hole. When the infliction is ordered to commence, each drum-boy, in rotation, is obliged to strip, for the purpose of administering five-and-twenty lashes (slowly counted by the drum-major) with freedom and vigour. In this practice of stripping there always appeared to me something so unnatural, inhuman, and butcher-like, that I have often felt most acutely my own degradation in being compelled to conform to it. After a poor fellow had received about a hundred lashes the blood would flow down his back in streams, and fly about in all directions with every additional blow of the instrument of torture; so that, by the time he had received three hundred, I have found my clothes all over blood from the knees to the crown of my head, and have looked as though I had just emerged from a slaughter-house. Horrified at my disgusting appearance, immediately after parade I have run into the barrack-room to escape from the observation of the soldiers, and to rid my clothes and person of my comrade's blood. Here I have picked and washed off my clothes pieces of skin and flesh that had been cut from the poor sufferer's back. What the flogging in Newgate or Bridewell may be I do not know, but *this is* MILITARY FLOGGING.

I am ignorant what kind of cats were used



when this pernicious system was first introduced into the army, but they are now, I believe, very different in different regiments, and indeed, there is sometimes a variety kept in the same corps. Those which I have seen and used were made of a thick and strong kind of whipcord: and in each lash, nine in number, and generally about two feet long, were tied *three* large knots, so that a poor wretch who was doomed to receive one thousand lashes, had twenty-seven thousand knots cutting into his back; and men have declared to me that the sensation experienced at each lash was as though the talons of a hawk were tearing the flesh off their bones.

Have the advocates for the continuance of this barbarous system ever handled one of these savage instruments? Have they ever poised the cat in their hands when clotted with a soldier's blood after punishment has been inflicted? If not, let me inform them that it has then almost weight enough to stun an ox, and requires the greatest exertion and dexterity in the drummer to wield it. I have heard poor fellows declare that, in this state, it falls like a mass of lead upon their backs.

If those whose duty it is to form the code of military laws will allow soldiers to possess the common feelings and sensibilities of other men, it must be obvious that degrading a man, by flogging him like some vile miscreant, must be attended with great and irreparable injury to the service. Since I entered the army, the practice of flogging has considerably abated, thanks to

the noble advocates for its total abolition; but even still the terrific cries for mercy are heard from the ranks of almost every regiment in the service, especially those which are abroad. If a man deserve such ignominy and debasement, he is unfit for a soldier, and ought to be discharged the service. Often have I been agonised to see the skin torn off the poor sufferer's wrists and legs, by lugging him up to the triangles as you would the vilest miscreant of the land, and afterwards an inexperienced drum-boy flogging him over the face and eyes. I have heard men beg for a drop of water to cool their parched mouths and burning tongues, which has been denied them. If we consider the character of all who are flogged by our civil laws, the degradation of the soldier becomes dreadfully manifest, they are the very dregs and scum of the earth, the very refuse of infamy! Do we not put our brave soldiers on a par with these poor wretches? The mode of flogging them is the same, except in the severity, which predominates in the military infliction: the disgrace and ignominy are the same. The common thief too is tried by his peers; he has the advantage of counsel; the proceedings against him are conducted in an open court, the particulars of his trial are communicated to the public, and the conduct of judges, juries, pleaders, and witnesses is subjected to public animadversion. Which of these privileges is conceded to the unfortunate private, amenable to the jurisdiction of the secret and inquisitorial tribunal of a court-martial? Oh!

how have I sighed to see brave fellows stripped to receive the merciless lash, who had often met their country's foe in bloody battle ! I have seen the gallant spirit whom no danger could deter, no peril could daunt, writhing under the lash of the vilest slave. The very words, " Strip, sir ! " carry with them sounds enough to annihilate all the better feelings of a soldier's nature. I am convinced, on the most mature reflection, that the moment you touch a man's back, you touch his loyalty. It tears from his brow sprigs of laurel which would otherwise blossom to maturity, and from his bosom all the bright beams of honour, faith, and love. The man feels himself dishonoured and degraded ; and, reflecting on his debasement, obduracy takes the place of obedience ; hatred that of love ; apathy of willingness ; and discontent deprives him for ever of that happiness which surely ought to be the lot of him who voluntarily leaves his home, and the dearest ties of nature, to cast his mite into the lap of his country's glory. The nobler feelings are usurped by those of a hardened and callous nature, and the mind feeds on its debasement, and lingers on its own dishonour. There will be found in such a man a sullen, restless, fretful, and irritable disposition, ever alive to malice and revenge. He becomes a discontented, grumbling, and disobedient soldier, who feels that he has nothing further to lose or care for. Thus he lives ; time is but a tell-tale of his woes : and, at last, in the cup of inebriation he seeks refuge from the storm, or, as he would

term it, *drowns* his cares and his sorrows. Repetition of his crime ensues, and further punishment is the sure consequence. For the bite of the tarantula there is an antidote; the moon wanes and becomes bright again; the rose fades under the influence of a meridian sun, but the evening breeze restores its fragrance and its freshness; the billows rage and are convulsed, yet subside again to calm repose: but this poor degraded man's peace returns not to its chamber of rest. If he is not the veriest wretch in the army, the sun of his happiness will begin to set, from the first moment of his degradation, never to rise again.

I will undertake to say that, if I had the opportunity, I could pick out the men who had been subjected to corporal punishment, from the ranks of every regiment in the service; for they are always to be traced by the sottish features of intemperance, the languid eye of sorrow, the care-worn cheek of despair, and the gait which seems to stoop under accumulated woe. They are well known. They are like spotted and diseased sheep, bearing some pestilential mark. Let any medical man attend the landing of troops from foreign climes, and I will be bound that, on examination of their persons, he will find fifteen out of every twenty with frightful backs, and whose ruin of constitution has been caused by an early flogging, for the mere infringement of some regimental order, in which the moral character bears not a part; perhaps for being absent from or late at parade or drill, or some

other trivial offence of parallel turpitude. By this ill-judged and cruel severity the service is robbed of men who might prove to be some of its brightest ornaments, and this before the bloom of boyhood has left their cheeks. Give a man but five or ten lashes, it scarcely breaks the surface of the skin ; but search the course of the wound, and you will find it buried in the inmost cavities of the heart, where it rankles, and sows the seeds of enmity between the sufferer and his country. If we sink or debase a man even beneath the feelings of his own uncultivated and barren mind, what can we expect from him ? It is hardly reasonable, in these times, to expect good for evil, though, in justice and right, that ought to be the soldier's creed ; yet there should, at the same time, be a reciprocation of feeling between him and that country for which he has tendered his life and deserted his all. Cruelty is so contrary to nature that it is distinguished by that scandalous name, inhumanity.

I have often weighed the flogging system deliberately in my mind, and viewed it in all its bearings ; but, looking on it in the most favourable aspect, I could never see but one good consequence that could ensue from it, and that as the result of desperation : viz. that those poor wretches who have been its victims will rush headlong into the cannon's mouth, or on the bayonet's point, to wipe away the sting of their disgrace. Thus numbers have met an early grave unpitied ; as each soldier and comrade would say, " Poor fellow, it is a happy release

from his woes; he has never done any good since he was punished." Flogging, I repeat, will never force men to obedience, but will assuredly drive them to commit crime. The very mental exertion which a man makes with the determination of receiving this disgraceful punishment without a murmur, necessarily sows in his bosom the seeds of obdurate and hardened feelings. He meets ignominy with a sullen apathetic contempt, endeavouring to smother the spark of revenge, which at that very time lurks and rankles in his heart. I have seen the most modest and previously well-conducted men, on receiving their first punishment, leave the square formed to witness their disgrace with indications of an obduracy and hardihood of which, an hour before, they were totally incapable.

If flogging be necessary, which I shall ever doubt, why cut a man's back to pieces, by giving him three or four hundred, and sometimes a thousand, lashes? I have heard soldiers declare that, after receiving one hundred lashes, the flesh becomes deadened, and they feel not the smart of the remainder; although, after this, I have seen pieces cut out of the back as big as a pea. Some men keep in hospital for months, in consequence of their merciless flagellations, and others will not leave it till they are invalided, taking care to keep the back from healing by applications which ultimately ruin their constitutions. At last they are sent home, and saddled upon the country on the ground of a debilitated constitution, or some other complaint,

when flogging is in reality the sole cause of their inefficiency. Young men, from their volatile dispositions and from thoughtlessness, are often the victims of the lash. For all the offences for which men, generally speaking, are first flogged, two or three hour's extra drills, or duty, would be an ample reparation to the offended laws; while the service would be benefited instead of injured. Let the channel of military delinquency be traced to its source, and it will be found that the very spring of nine-tenths of it is flogging; for if the CRIMES which are committed among the military were seriously investigated, they would be almost confined to men who have fallen under the lash.

The career of a flogged man is, that from one end of the year to another, he is drunk, confined, tried, punished, sent to the hospital, and thence to the perpetration of some other crime. He becomes a burthen to himself and a disgrace to his regiment, and at last, if he does not sink into an early grave, he is flogged out of the service, to be a further burthen on his country's bounty.

There is more expense attending the trial, framing the charges, and making entries against such a man, than would fit out and keep a good soldier. There was one man in the troop with me, that did not do one day's duty in two years, but during the whole of that period went through a regular routine of flogging, drills, and solitary confinement. Often has he told me, that he was sunk so low, and felt so debased in his own esti-

nation, that no event could raise him to what he had been before he was flogged. He said, a sense of degradation stuck to him like a pestilential disease; that all his efforts had been exerted to shake it off, but he found it still hanging on his mind, and twining round his heart: it was his misery by day, and haunted his wretched pillow by night. He declared to me, that after lying thinking on it, and tossing to and fro, when all his comrades were asleep, he would get up and drink quantities of spirituous liquors, to obtain, by forgetfulness, a short respite from his woes; and that reflecting on what he had been, and what he then was, almost drove him to take his own life. This poor creature soon after died, with some thousands of lashes upon his back, before he had completed his four-and-twentieth year.

Our soldiers, now-a-days, are a different class of men to what they were twenty or thirty years ago, and can be managed by less coercive means. As flogging in the army decreases, so will crime in an equal proportion. I am persuaded that, to use a soldier's adage, "IF WE FLOG ONE DEVIL OUT, WE FLOG FIFTY IN." In all professions, in whatsoever sphere we move, we all expect to rise above our first apprenticeship; but the moment you touch a soldier's back, it writes opposite his name, in the black book of crime, "A private you are, and a private you must remain." A man, after this, has no encouragement to amend, no inducement to do good, no incentive to fly from his disobedient ways; his



channel of emulation is damned up; his good actions pass unheeded; while his crimes are readily noticed, and tenaciously and rigidly punished. A continual watch is kept upon such a man's conduct; the broad A of infamy is written upon his back; and it would be better that a man immediately died after being once touched by the crimsoned cat-o'-nine-tails.

The opinions which I have thus advanced have been directed to you, Sir, from a conviction that your political consistency has given you a character and a weight in the assembly of our law makers that will ensure attention to any subject you may advocate, and I am induced to suppose you will now be the soldier's friend, from your expressed determination of bringing the subject before Parliament. These opinions on the too long allowed practice of flogging soldiers are founded on my observation of its effects during a service of thirty-four years; from having patiently listened to, and estimated the validity of, the remarks of men who had been its victims; and from having watched the subsequent conduct of these men, and marked their progress onward, either to utter ruin or to death. The facts which I have detailed are undeniable, having been witnessed by me in passing through the several gradations of the service, from the waddling drum-boy to the strutting sub. In my humble opinion, the system of corporeal punishment calls aloud for total abolition. Its infliction is cruel, and fraught with every kind of evil; it is unnecessary, because I am convinced

that our brave soldiers may be restrained by milder fetters than those of despotism; and it is grossly impolitic, because it never conduces to the end desired. It is a foul blot on our military regulations; a bloody page in our code of military law; and a disgrace to a civilized nation. It strikes at the very basis of the army's welfare, and will, so long as continued, be the barrier which shall prevent many a young man of respectability from adding his name to the list of competitors for glory.

Having freely expressed my humble opinion in favour of the abolition of corporeal punishment, it may naturally be said, "Well, admitting that we flog no more in the army, military crime, of course, cannot go unpunished or unchecked; some substitute must be found for the mode of discipline hitherto practised." Now, although it must be quite obvious that a man may be able to point out the decided evil resulting from any given system, and yet not qualified to indicate the remedy which shall compensate for its supercession; yet I shall, with the same candour with which I have deprecated the practice of flogging, not hesitate to state what I should substitute in its room, confidently assured that no remedy which may be proposed can be attended with worse effects to the service than the system at present practised, or with less advantage to the individual who incurs its infliction.

If I commanded a regiment, I should make it my primary study to ascertain what descrip-

tion of men I had to deal with ; for I do not think it at any time consistent or reasonable to punish every man in the same manner. What would be a punishment to one, would be laughed at and ridiculed by another. If a man appeared in the guard report for any crime of moment, I should endeavour to ascertain from his officer the disposition of that man : and then, if possible, adapt a punishment suitable to his disposition. An admonition, kindly tendered, would have the desired effect on some men, when harsh means would only serve to sink them deeper in crime. On the other hand, harsh measures would be the only means to check a man of a contrary disposition.

I should be very tenacious in punishing a man for a first offence, or permitting such a man to remain an hour in a common guard-room, or classing him with the hardened delinquents of the regiment. A young man kept confined in a guard-room will learn more depravity in twenty-four hours, than in his barrack-room in ten years. I have seen sixty men confined in one small guard-room, all in a state of intoxication ; some reeling and tumbling about, some singing, some dancing, some swearing, some fighting, some quite naked, and some in a state of utter insensibility. A place in which such examples are constantly to be found, cannot be deemed very likely to improve the morals of inexperienced youth. It must, therefore, be admitted to be advisable that all officers, before they order men into confinement, should ascertain who and

what these men are, as the guard-room is a seat of vice, where the drunkard glories in his shame, the hardened offender in his depravity, and where all the vicious characters assembled will unite their efforts to endeavour to instil into the mind of their new associate in disgrace, the germ of revenge against him who condemned him to such company. I am persuaded that much mischief is done by confining the moral with the immoral prisoner. It is incumbent on the commanding officer of every regiment to make himself as thoroughly acquainted as possible with the character, temper, and turn of mind, of every man of his troop or company. If an officer omit this, he neglects a most prominent feature of his duty; for, until he is acquainted with his men, he cannot duly administer justice. But, while I am thus speaking of the duty of an officer, I must not allow you to forget that, as our martial law is at present constituted, *the character of a man avails him nothing at the court-martial*: they must award a certain quantity of lashes for a particular offence; so that a man who becomes intoxicated for the first time in his life, and hates himself for the act, is awarded the same punishment as the habitual drunkard. It rests in the power of the commanding officer to be sure, to mitigate or remit, as before stated; but this prerogative is seldom exercised; *as his sending the man to a court-martial is an avowal that he considers him worthy of punishment.*

On the subject of courts-martial and flogging,

the following remarks were made by Mr. Hobhouse, in the House of Commons:—

Mr. Hobhouse was of opinion that in courts-martial, unanimity should prevail among its members, previous to a decision inflicting corporeal punishment. The noble lord (Palmerston) seemed to object to this, but he was at a loss to know on what grounds the noble lord objected. He wondered how any man of common honour and humanity, could rise up in support of a system so degrading and disgusting as that of inflicting corporeal punishment; and he owned he was at a loss to discover why soldiers should be exempt from the benefit of a rule which prevailed in British jurisprudence, namely, that of having juries unanimous in their verdict. If it were necessary that twelve jurymen should agree, why should not five men be unanimous, before sentence should be carried into execution? Some rule of this sort was required in the army; but perhaps it would be better at once if the house were to express its unanimous opinion, that the degrading and disgusting system of corporeal punishment should no longer exist. He had not heard a single argument from honourable gentlemen who advocated the system; all they said, or could say, was, that it was so. That was the only reason they gave for its continuance. Picquetting was at one time thought necessary, but now it was no longer practised. Experience proved its inutility, and experience would also determine that corporeal punishments were unnecessary. The

gallant officer on the second bench, had, of his own knowledge, declared that a certain number of men in a regiment which he named, were so often flogged, that they were called flogging-blocks. If, therefore, flogging was constantly practised, it must fail of its effects, and produce no beneficial results. In the French army, no punishment amounting to the infliction of the lash was practised, and no one could dispute the superior discipline of that army. The honourable member concluded by hoping that some regular motion, similar to that which his honourable colleague (Sir Francis Burdett) had so often brought forward, would be made for the purpose of abolishing corporeal punishments in the army. He hoped that no sessions of Parliament would be allowed to pass without bringing forward such a motion.—*Naval and Military Magazine*, vol. i; p. 570, A. D. 1827.

The preceding observations, while they do credit to the best feelings of human nature, are forcibly applicable to the case of the British soldier; to the man, who, in the hour of danger, is to step forward and defend his country from the ruthless spoiler, to rush into the hostile phalanx or the cannon's mouth in order to protect the lives and liberties of his countrymen! yet this man, this hero! for the most trifling irregularity, is, in his mode of trial, reduced beneath the shoplifter, the pickpocket or the highwayman! The thief, when placed at the bar of justice, if he be unable to employ counsel, is defended by the judge, who also states his case impartially to

the jury, and finishes his address to them by remarking that, should any doubt exist in their minds, to give the prisoner the benefit of it. A flaw in the indictment becomes an acquittal; the jury, twelve respectable members of society, must be unanimous before a verdict of guilty can be pronounced. But, how stands the soldier when put on his trial? A court-martial consists of a president, and four members; who are not required to be unanimous in their opinion as to the soldier's guilt. If two happen to be for an acquittal and two for punishment, the third has the casting vote: thus, the soldier may be said to be tried and condemned by one person, and very often by the very man who has been the means of bringing him to trial.

I believe the soldier may have recourse to the privilege of challenging the members of the court-martial; but woe betide him should he resort to such an expedient! In thirty-three years' service, I do not recollect an instance of a challenge on a regimental court-martial.

I have known officers who composed a court-martial on the worst possible terms with each other; and I unhesitatingly state, that many a man has been sacrificed entirely from a want of harmony in feeling in the members of the court-martial; and many a culprit has escaped from the same cause. Suppose the four members [are] divided, and the president was either partial or hostile to the prisoner, it will easily be perceived how the business would terminate. But, can this be justice?

The guard report is laid before the commanding officer every morning, in which is contained the names of all prisoners, and the offences with which they are charged. He has the power to release, as well as to order the infliction of fine, solitary confinement, extra drills, &c. but the very act of ordering a man to be tried evinces a disposition to flog him.

I will now give what I consider a proper and efficient substitute for military flogging, and the first and best is solitary confinement; for, when a man has suffered his confinement, his person being unstained and unspotted, he begins, as it were, a new career, endeavouring to regain that character which for a time he had lost by some trifling breach of orders. Extra drills, parades, &c. are also efficacious remedies to compel soldiers to obedience, instead of flogging them and degrading them in the eyes of their comrades.

I have often thought it would be an excellent plan for soldiers to be subject to a forfeiture of their pay, for each breach of military discipline. I can see no reason why it should not be considered fair to put the soldier on the same footing with a mechanic; that is to say, if he would not work or do his appointed duty, or if he disabled himself from performing that duty by improper means, drunkenness or otherwise, for those periods during which the service was deprived of his exertions he should forfeit his daily pay, and receive only the rations usually given to prisoners. Indeed, the articles of war ex-



press, in their very first section, that for a first offence, a soldier shall forfeit twelve pence, &c. &c. If soldiers were forced to pay for crime, I am convinced we should hear but little of it. The money so forfeited might go towards a bounty for purchasing substitutes to serve in the room of the offender, should he persist in disobedience; but, should he continue a certain number of years well-behaved, then it would be a judicious measure that the money should be returned to him with interest. This would be at once a check upon his bad actions, and an incentive to spur him on to regain that which through his misconduct he had lost. But if no amendment could be discovered in the offender, by the time the forfeits amounted to a sufficient sum to purchase a substitute, then let this be done, and the offender discharged and branded (as before hinted) in such a way as would prevent him again entering the service, say on the right shoulder, which would not be a bar to his returning to respectability in civil society if he pleased. This would be some saving to the nation, and an essential benefit to the service. The forfeited sums belonging to men who might happen to die before the expiration of their period of probation, might be appropriated to some benevolent purposes that would benefit the service; or, under certain circumstances, perhaps, paid over to the man's widow or family. These are a few of the substitutes which I have ventured to recommend in the room of flogging.

Trusting that you will continue your praiseworthy exertions in favour of the soldier,

I am, Sir Francis,

Your most obedient humble servant,

JOHN SHIPP,  
*Late Lieutenant in his Majesty's  
87th Regiment of Foot.*

## CONCLUSION.

Knowing as I do all the evils to which the private soldier is subjected; having participated also in his toils and privations; it has often been to me a matter of surprise, that there is so much difficulty in rousing public philanthropy to exert herself for his relief; the poor of body and spirit of the ordinary classes but utter the voice of entreaty, and humanity starts to their assistance; the groans of the far distant slave have been heard, and were not unattended to by the mighty nation. How is it then, that such bodies, as our private soldiers and our heroic sailors, have been so long labouring under the scourge of the cat? Their situation has often been canvassed in Parliament; yet the voice which was raised in their behalf has "passed by as the idle wind." It is with a view of making another effort in their favour, that I have written this little work; to dissipate the apathy which on this subject has so long existed; to

induce my countrymen to come forward, and blot from their national military code those clauses which are derogatory to human nature ; which are disgraceful to a British subject, and which ought only to exist where despotism has her sway ; to mark the distinction between the slave and the free ; at once to exhibit to the latter the superiority of his station ; and to shew to the former, the immunities with which freedom is attended, and thus spur him on to gain his own. But, monstrous anomaly ! while the military tools of the greatest despot (*a*) that ever lived, marched to meet the enemy with upraised heads and spotless backs, the soldiers of Britain, the soldiers of freedom, hung their heads like slaves at the exhibition of the scourge ; and the scarified backs of their comrades, exhibited to all the degradation to which they also were subject. Reader, do you still ask, why this eternal theme ? I answer, because I have sat beside the bed of death, which the infliction of the “ cat ” has made ; the bed of the wretched, and of the

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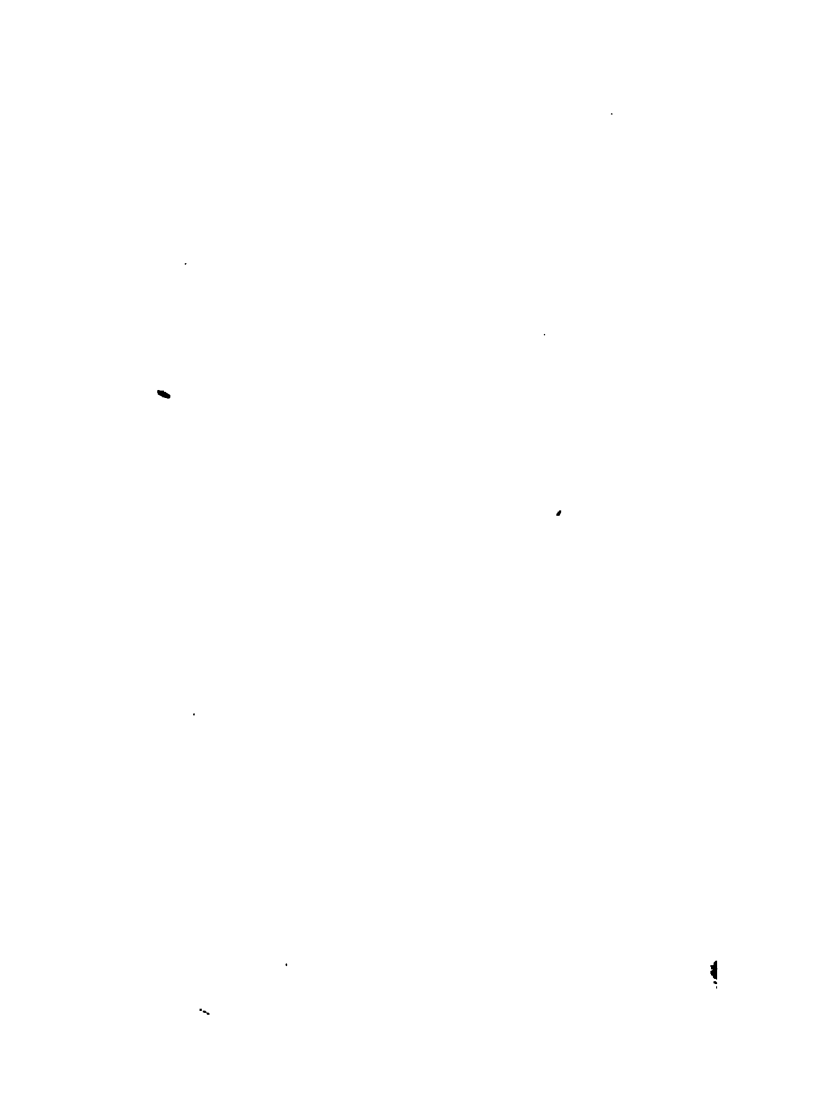
(*a*) Buonaparte.

broken hearted; I have witnessed the high spirited, the brave, and the beautiful, reduced by this damnable instrument to cripples; to meanness and to cowardice. I have seen the hand imploringly raised to avert punishment; which has, after punishment, been clenched in despair to destroy the life which God himself had given. Under its baneful influence, I have known sober men become drunkards; good men become reckless; and honourable men become disloyal; therefore, until the evil be removed, while my voice can be heard by my countrymen, it shall not cease to sound in their ears the atrocities of the "cat;" and to obtain his influence in favour of this object, my last breath shall be breathed to my God.



THE END.

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X





